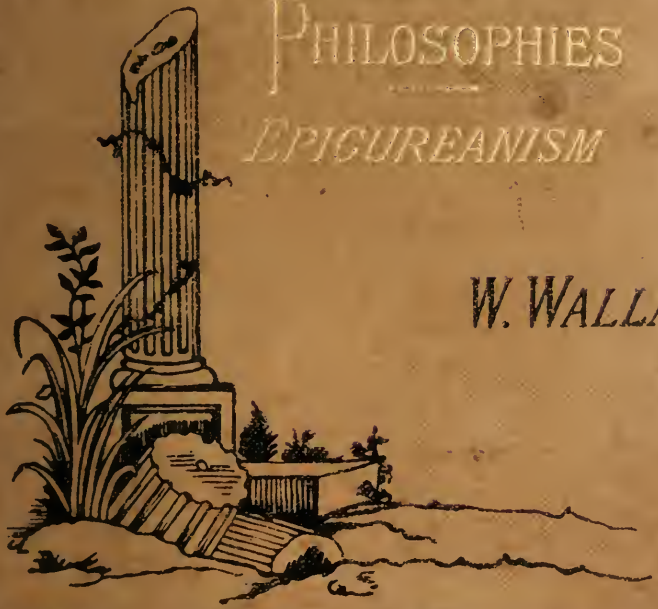
CHIEF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHIES

EPICUREANISM



W. WALLACE


THIS BOOK
BELONGS TO
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EPICUREANISM.

CHIEF ANCIENT PHILOSOPHIES.

EPICUREANISM.

BY

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EPICUREANISM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

When the Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius, towards the close of the second century of our era, resolved to give Imperial sanction to the higher teaching of the Roman world by the state endowment of a philosophical professoriate, he found four schools or sects dividing the public favour and drawing in their several directions the best thought of the time. These schools were the school of Plato, known as the Academic; the school of Aristotle, known as the Peripatetic; the school of Zeno, known as the Stoic; and the school of Epicurus, known as the Epicurean. It was not without a cause that the fourth school continued to be known by the name of its founder, which it did not exchange like the others for an epithet drawn from some favourite locality. To the very close of its career the Epicurean sect clung reverently and lovingly to the person of the master, to whom, with one accord, his followers attributed their escape from the thraldom of superstition and of unworthy fears and desires. The member of

another school might assert towards his teachers a certain impartiality of critical examination. If Plato and Socrates were dear to the Platonist, truth was dearer still. But to the Epicurean the belief in his characteristic doctrines was blended with, and humanized by, attachment to the memory of the founder of his creed.

Of the four schools, two were more ancient than the others. The Academics and the Peripatetics preceded the Stoics and Epicureans by more than half a century; they continued to exist and flourish long after the younger sects had died away into silence. But during the four centuries which witnessed the rise and spread of Epicurean and Stoical doctrines, from B.C. 250 to A.D. 150, the two other schools were forced into the background, and abandoned by all but a few professed students. In the Roman world, the Stoic and Epicurean systems divided between themselves the suffrages of almost all who cared to think at all. Plato and Aristotle were almost unknown, for the two schools which professed to draw their original inspiration from these masters had rapidly drifted away from the definite doctrine of their leaders. The doctrine both of Plato and of Aristotle had been of a kind which, in modern times, we should term Idealism. It had been sustained by an enthusiasm for knowledge, and carried on by a great wave of intellectual energy. Plato and Aristotle gathered the ripe fruit from that Athenian garden where Pericles, Phidias, and Sophocles had visibly signified the spring-time of

blossom and brightness. Strong in the accumulated strength of a century of Athenian power and splendour, they raised their eyes fearlessly upon the world, and tried to discover its plan and meaning as the home of humanity—the humanity which they saw around them and felt within them. They endeavoured to trace the steps in the long ladder of means and ends, which, from the analogy of what they saw in their types of human society, they believed would also be found in the natural world. They looked upon everything in nature and in humanity as the realization of an idea, as a stage in the unfolding of a ruling principle. Everything to Plato was the product of an "idea of the Good"; everything to Aristotle was a step in the development of the ends of an intelligent Nature. To exist, for both of them, meant to embody or to express an idea, or plan. At the summit of all things, the principle and centre of the phenomena of the human and the natural world, was a creative plan or intellect, always carrying itself forth into activity, everlastingly productive, and consciously surveying and embracing its own several manifestations. The question as to the materials employed in order to carry out these plans, was noticed by these thinkers only as it served to illustrate the process of realization. At least, this is the case with Plato to a large degree, to a less degree with Aristotle.

The point on which both schools originally laid most stress, next to their fundamental principle, was an analysis of the order and concatenation of existence as a reasonable and intelligent system. They

fixed their attention on the connection of one idea with another, on the relation between one stage in the complex scheme of actual existence and another. To bring together and to divide, to see differences where they are concealed, and to find sameness between things different, to discriminate and connect kinds and classes, is, according to Plato, the main work of that discussion or conversation (dialectic) which is the true art of the philosopher. In other words, the point towards which his interest is converging, as distinct from the fields in which that interest is operative, is what a later age would describe partly as logic, partly as metaphysic. It is metaphysic, when the relations and connections under examination are supposed to be the real underlying relations in the existent objects of the world. It is logic, when these relations and connections are regarded as modes of our thought, the means or methods by which we as intelligent beings seek to comprehend and rationalize the objects of nature and art. So far as Plato is concerned, it is scarcely possible to say when we are in metaphysic and when we are in logic. The ideas which are the denizens of a logical heaven, which are the patterns embodied in nature, are in his own writings not quite cut off from the ideas which the mind entertains when it attains knowledge. But in Aristotle the distinction between logic (or, as he calls it, Analytic) and Metaphysics (or, as he terms it, Theology or the First Philosophy) has been accomplished. The latter, as well as the former, he in part inherits from

Plato; but it is in logic that he is most original, and gives most substantial extension to the philosophic field. On another side, too, Aristotle carved out a course of his own. The physical universe had a double attraction for him. On one hand it presented itself to him under the aspect of a process of movement, a working-out in time and space of the same eternal principles and relations of being which had formed the topic of his metaphysics. Under this point of view, a somewhat abstract and metaphysical one, he treats existence, in those books which bear what seems to a modern reader the somewhat misleading title of "Physical Lectures." But there is another side to Aristotle's interest in nature. In psychology, in natural history, and in his political studies, he is not merely a great metaphysician: he is a keen observer, and a laborious collector of facts. He enumerates, with all detail, the actual phenomena presented by experience, quite apart from the theoretical relations of the system under which they ought, from the other point of view, to range themselves.

Thus, in Plato and in Aristotle, there were warring tendencies. In Plato there is, on the one hand, the political and practical instinct which makes him a moral or educational reformer, and, on the other hand, the logical, or, to keep his own larger word, dialectical interest which impels him to criticise and to analyze, and to say that, "the life to which criticism is denied is no life for man."[1] In Aristotle,

[1] Plato, *Apologia*, 31 A.

again, we see a constant wrestling of spirit between the ideal and metaphysical bent which is at home in the abstract forms of being, and the realistic sense which notices every detail in the operations of the rational mind and in the phenomena of animate nature, so as to assign to all minutiæ, even to the most degraded animals,[1] their place in the ample collection of instances.

The two schools which inherited the Academy of Plato and the Peripatos of Aristotle did not in either case carry off more than a fragment of their master's mantle. The Academic sect came more and more to give the reins to the critical, logical tendencies, which, in Plato himself, had been subordinated to his deep sense of the surpassing value of ethical ideas and the moral life. With the New Academy, as it is termed, the school of Arcesilaus and Carneades, every dogmatic tinge in the teaching had paled before the predominance of sceptical and critical polemic against other doctrines. The New Academy, inspired by the influence of its contemporary Pyrrho, the great sceptical philosopher of the ancient world, became the main arsenal where were forged the weapons of a universal destructive criticism. Such, in a mild form, was the attitude from which, for example, Cicero dealt with the dogmas of philosophy. It was the spirit which denies, the reason which rends in pieces its own constructions, that prevailed in the Academic school.

[1] Aristotle, *De Partibus Animalium*, I. 5.

The case was a little different with the Peripatetic school which immediately succeeded Aristotle. If Plato was not an Academic or Platonist, no more was Aristotle a Peripatetic. His immediate followers, Theophrastus and Strato of Lampsacus, soon left the metaphysical idealism of their master. The great principle of a cosmic reason, an intellectual deity at the head of all existence, was abandoned and neglected. The logical and the physical departments were made the predominant feature in the tradition of the school, and gradually usurped the place of metaphysical inquiries. The speculative, transcendental element in Aristotle was eliminated, and nothing left but "positive" science. Aristotelianism was thus like a cask which had its bottom knocked out: it collapsed into fragments. Strato of Lampsacus spoke no more of God, but only of nature, and practically set aside the distinction which Aristotle had drawn between the reason and the senses. In the next generation, Aristotelianism sank into greater stagnation; it became more positive and less philosophical; it passed into scholasticism, and put learning in the place of wisdom and research.

A day, indeed, came when both Platonism and Aristotelianism entered on a new phase. In the early centuries of our era the writings of the two philosophers were made a text for philological study: they were interpreted, annotated, reconciled, and systematized by the commentators of the first six centuries, from Andronicus to Simplicius. But for our immediate purpose it is sufficient to remember

that in the generation which succeeded Aristotle the Academic and Peripatetic schools no longer represented the mind of their founders. They became more and more exclusively intellectual, logical, and formal: the philosophers degenerated into professors and schoolmen. For the most part they taught something of logic and rhetoric. And the inability of the followers to sustain the idealism of their first chiefs led to a growth of sceptical and critical intellect. Philosophy ceased to be the serious enterprise which Socrates had made it. It was no longer the arbiter of life and conduct—something than which, as Plato says "no greater good came or will come to mortal race by the gift of the gods." It was now only a preliminary training which communicated the art of reasoning and the abstract principles of morals and legislation. It had become then indeed, what it has mainly become at the present day, a recognised part of the university curriculum, and nothing more.

The great schools of Plato and Aristotle had in the hands of their successors declared themselves bankrupt. Idealism had apparently proved a failure. One by one the great ideal principles had been surrendered. Aristotle had attacked the transcendentalism of Plato: he was himself superseded by a more realistic doctrine; and in the period of general scepticism which set in like a flood the only thing that seemed worth cultivating was the little grammatical, philological or physiological knowledge that had been at that period collected. Amid the general dissatisfaction with the results to which thought,

rising into the empyrean and tracing from an ideal standpoint the plan of the world, had led its adherents, there was in the air a desire for a new doctrine, a new moral panacea. This time the doctrine must be realist. If the old schools had been spiritualistic, the new doctrine must be materialistic. If the old schools had made thought and ideas all in all, the sole true existence, the new school must admit the existence of nothing which was not corporeal. Instead of reason, the new school must base everything on sensation. The old schools of Plato and Aristotle had gone boldly to work, confident in the strength of thought. The new schools must justify their starting-point, and prove their foundation in the presence of a strong hostile force of sceptics.

The circumstances of Greece, too, had changed greatly since Plato and Aristotle wrote. A period of petty republics, of a more or less aristocratic character, had been succeeded, since the conquest of central and southern Greece by the Macedonians, by a period of fusion and of confusion. The monarchical principle, which had established itself at the summit of the State, had not yet been able to organize itself in the details and connect itself with constitutional life. The city was not, as it had been in Plato's time, its own sovereign: its affairs were subject to the will of some foreign king, himself but insecurely seated on his throne, and acting more often as an instigation to evil-doing than as a hope to those who did well. The glory and charm of the old Greek political life in the service of those who were almost personal acquaint-

ances had passed away. Political life in the Macedonian epoch was only possible either for those who had the courage to adopt and foster the wishes of their compatriots to regain their freedom, or for those who could dare the mistrust and enmity of their fellow-citizens by acting as the ministers of an alien despot. The first course was dangerous, and often unwise: the second was generally ignoble. All that was left for those who were neither disposed to suffer martyrdom as patriots, nor to court princely favours by a knavish submission, was to take part in the farce, as it had now become, of municipal government. But to undertake such a post might be performed as a duty: it could not, and must not, be sought as an honour.

The distance between the age of Plato and the age of Zeno and Epicurus, the founders of the two new sects which supplanted their predecessors, may be illustrated by the character of the comic plays, which found favour with either. The comedy of Aristophanes has for its scene the main resorts of the public political life of its time. It is a caricature of public men and public measures. Athens, with its foreign relations and its domestic politics, is the topic which reappears in a hundred shapes and drags into its compass even the inmates of the women's chamber and the characters and ideas of the public thinkers. In the new comedy of Menander and Philemon, public life is unknown. It is the family and the social aspects of life which are the perpetual theme. Instead of generals and statesmen, demagogues and revolutionaries, the new comedy presents

a recurring story of young men's love affairs, and old men's economies, of swaggering captains and wily valets-de-chambre, hangers-on at rich men's tables and young women working mischief by their charms. The whole comedy turns on one aspect of domestic life—it is full of embroiling engagements between lovers, and brings the cook and the dinner-table prominently on the stage.

In such a set of circumstances rose the systems of Stoicism and Epicureanism. Like all systems they were the products of their age, but not merely a product. They summed up and drew out the conclusions to which the past had furnished them with the premises; but by the very act of formulating the result, they gave it greater consistency and power. They helped men to see the ideals of life, which their circumstances were leading them, hesitatingly and imperfectly, to adopt.

Already in the lifetime of Plato other disciples of Socrates had learned a different lesson from their common teacher. The self-reliant spirit of criticism and the independence of conventionality which marked Socrates had touched them more than his interest in all that was Athenian and his love for knowledge. Whilst to Plato and Aristotle the highest knowledge had been valued solely for its own sake and not as a means to any further end, to the thinkers of whom we now speak knowledge seemed worthy to be prosecuted only so far as it tended to produce a clear self-centred judgment, and to give some principle for the regulation of personal conduct. Those thinkers

belong to two kinds. At the head of the one stood Antisthenes, the founder of a sect which came to be called Cynical, and of which the most noted member was Diogenes. At the head of the other stood Aristippus of Cyrene, from whom his followers have been called Cyrenaics.

The foremost characteristic of these schools is their hostility to all conventions. They were outrageous realists. They disregarded and despised the follies of those who allowed themselves to be enthralled by the bands of opinion, of custom, fashion and conventional decorum. Aristippus was a man of the world, who shrank from the bonds of political life. He told Socrates that he was, and meant to be, a stranger everywhere,[1] free as the bird from all the burdens and privileges of citizenship, making himself everywhere at home, bound by no ties and no associations, enjoying each scene of life as it came with no thought of other times, and with butterfly-like lightness flitting to-morrow to other scenes and new delights. A life of pleasant and varied excitements, untroubled by any checks from fashion, morality or religion, was the ideal of Aristippus. He let others keep the political life going, and came in as occasion suited to enjoy the fruits of their labours. Antisthenes and Diogenes could scarcely be more cynical than Aristippus, but they showed their cynicism in another way. They, too, claimed independence as the chief good. But while Aristippus was a man of substance,

[1] Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, II. I, 13.

they had no fortune or social position to fall back upon. Antisthenes was a poor man, who earned a living by teaching rhetoric. Of Diogenes and his tub everybody has heard. These men sought independence in renunciation and asceticism. Let a man learn how little he really needs, they said, and he will soon be master of his own welfare and superior to the caprices of fortune. What Aristippus with his buoyancy and versatility obtained in a round of pleasures, the Cynics sought in self-denial and the practice of endurance. Like Aristippus, they were indifferent to country: they professed themselves citizens of the world.

During the times of Plato and Aristotle, doctrines like these were only in opposition, and even as an opposition they made but a slight figure. They were mainly a practical protest against the dominant tendency to sacrifice the individual to the community. They had and could have but little in the way of systematic doctrine. They live in the pages of the history of philosophy by the repartees of which the anecdotes about them are full. As is natural with those who protest against the exaggeration of a principle, they took up an exaggerated attitude themselves. Very soon the Cyrenaics found that a round of pleasures was likely to contradict its professed aim, and one of them Hegesias, swung round so far as to declare happiness impossible, and to suggest the desirability of death. As for the Cynics, they could never know where to stop in their asceticism: and were rightly reminded that so long as they failed to

throw off their cloak and imitate the naked sages of India, they might be charged with luxurious habits.

It was different when Stoicism and Epicureanism appeared. What had previously been the protest emphatically acted by a few, had now by the force of circumstances become the general position and drift of the world. A country to live and die for,—to be the scene and the reward of one's highest aspirations and best labours,—hardly existed for any one. More and more the old separations between cities were breaking down and the old jealousies were fading away. Athens had admitted many aliens within her walls. From Syria and Phœnicia, from Tarsus and Berytus, came strangers who soon made themselves at home. The successors of Alexander, by their changing alliances and continual wars, waged largely around Greece, the carcass over which these vultures hovered, introduced a kind of loose unity among the peoples on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean. The Hellenistic period began.

In these circumstances Zeno and Epicurus about the year 300 B.C. founded at Athens two new systems of philosophy. Almost from the beginning they were in opposition to each other, and the intensity of their opposition did not diminish during the five or six centuries while they subsisted side by side. But in certain important points in opposition to the doctrine of Plato and Aristotle they were at one. Both of them practically ignored the State, and struck away whatever influences interposed between the individual man and the ultimate springs of human actions.

Both dealt with man solely as an individual, who can, if he thinks it desirable, make terms with society, but who has a prior and natural right to live and progress for himself. To the perfection or the happiness of the individual everything was made subordinate. A man's sole duties were, according to their view, towards himself.

In pronouncing this decision, they carried to its further result that separation between the life of political or public activity and the life of studious search after truth, and that decided depreciation of the former which both Plato and Aristotle had sometimes suggested and sometimes expressed. But when they went further in this direction, and made the search for truth only a means to secure freedom from fears and passions, they presented a marked contrast to their predecessors. With the Stoics and Epicureans ethics is the end and goal, and an ethic moreover which looks only to the interests of the individual. To Plato and Aristotle morality was the elementary basis for a reasonable life,—the presupposition on which a man was to raise a superstructure of science, and work for the welfare of his community and of the human kind. Such is the conception, for example, embodied in Plato's "Republic." But to the Stoics and Epicureans the main question was how each was to save his own soul, to secure his own independence and serenity, and to live his own life well and happily.

The Stoics and Epicureans addressed themselves to the human being who, whatever may be his associations, is still at the root of his nature alone. They

treated him as something which is an end in itself, not as a mere fragment of society. Like Christianity, they spoke to the human soul, stripped of most of its national and social disguises. They appealed to a wider public, and a more generically human interest than Plato or Aristotle. They spoke to the man, and not merely to the citizen,—to the common man, and not merely to the scholar,—to the whole man, and not merely to the reason. It was of these schools that Lord Bacon spoke when he said that the moral philosophy of the heathen world was a sort of theology to it. They really covered the same ground, at least in part, which is now taken up by religion.

Both of them are in the main ethical systems, if by ethics we mean an attempt to discover what is the chief end of man, and how it can be attained. To that everything else was subordinated. It is in these schools, especially in the Stoic, that we first come upon the division of philosophy, afterwards so general, into three parts, an ethical, logical, and physical theory. The physical and the logical are for the sake of the ethical. And it is in these points that they especially differ from the Cyrenaic and Cynic schools. They proceed more systematically, and lay their foundations deeper. They do not scorn, especially the Stoics, to take a leaf out of the note-books of Plato and Aristotle. The Epicureans were all for practice, and opponents frequently derided them as illiterate and illogical. The Stoics, on the contrary, were pertinacious and somewhat pedantic logicians, to whom the scholastics really owed many of those logical sub-

tleties which are commonly by mistake attributed to Aristotle. But in whatever way they sought it, the aim which both Stoic and Epicurean had in view in their logic was to reach certainty and reality. The question of the criterion, or how we can know whether our thoughts bring us to real existence or no, is a fundamental problem with them. And combined with this is a conviction common to both, that the real is the material, corporeal,—what is touched and seen.

These three points,—their individualism in morals, their subordination of all science to an ethical end, and their materialistic realism,—are perhaps the three points most conspicuously common to the two schools. When we look at their differences, we find that the Stoics were less opposed than their rivals to the general character of philosophic tradition and to the currents of public opinion. In fact, between the three schools of Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno, on the one hand, and Epicureanism on the other, there was a considerable interval. The three former had more of a scholastic and philosophical culture, and were more suitable instruments for training young pupils. The fourth school appealed to maturer but less educated characters.

The Stoics, on the whole, supported the interests of the existing religious and social order. They held that a man ought, save in peculiar circumstances, to take an active part in public life and to found a family in the commonwealth. The saving clause, of course, may admit of a very wide interpretation. The

majority of the school, too, tried to give a rationalized explanation of the popular mythology, and thus to justify the religious creed of their country.[1] They accommodated themselves in these points to circumstances ; but the perfect Stoic, or as he was still called, the Cynic, the ideal saint of the Stoical writers, rejected these modifications, and gave his whole life to preach and practise righteousness. Other characteristics of the Stoics lay in the conception of duty and obligation, which, at least among the Roman Stoics, came prominently forward amongst their minor morals ; in the doctrine of man's dependence on the general order of the universe,—a doctrine which tended to inculcate a fatalistic Quietism, had it not been counteracted by the energetic self-consciousness encouraged by the Stoical doctrine from another side,—in the absolute distinction set between the wise and the foolish as two diametrically opposite categories of man,—and, above all, in the reference of all the training and ideals of the Stoic to action, performance of function, doing the duties of that situation in life where providence had placed him.

The Epicureans stood aloof from practice to a far greater extent than the Stoics. The end of their system looked to life, and not to business : the end of their wisdom was to enjoy life. They did not profess, like the Stoics, that their wise man was capable of doing well any of the innumerable vocations in life

[1] Panætius, the Roman Stoic, is an example of the "radical" wing of the Stoic school, which held a different attitude on these and other points.

which he might choose to adopt. They claimed that he would live like a god amongst men and conquer mortality by his enjoyment at every instant of an immortal blessedness. While the Stoic represented man as the creature and subject of divinity, the Epicurean taught him that he was his own master. While the Stoic rationalized the mythology of their country into a crude and fragmentary attempt at theology, the Epicurean rejected all the legends of the gods and denied the deity any part in regulating the affairs of men. Both agreed in founding ethics on a natural as opposed to a political basis. But they differed in their application of the term nature. To the Stoic it meant the instinct of self-conservation—the maintenance of our being in its entirety,—acting up to our duty. To the Epicurean it meant having full possession of our own selves, enjoying to the full all that the conditions of human life permit.

These were the main schools of ancient philosophy. But there were other schools, or at least other names of philosophical opinion, current in the early days of the Roman Empire. One of these, and the longest-lived of all, was Pythagoreanism. Like Epicureanism, it had a semi-religious character; it clung to the name of its founder, and maintained a long tradition. But it was very unlike the latter in the poetical and fantastic character of its doctrine, in its proneness to superstition. About the first century after Christ it was brought into renewed fame by the alleged miracles and superhuman wisdom of Apollonius of Tyana, and from that time onwards it continued to exert a

great, if a not very beneficial influence on the progress of ancient philosophy and religion. Lastly, there were a few Sceptics, those nomads of the philosophical world,[1] who disdain all persistent culture of the soil, and hover round the hosts of dogmatic thinkers, seeking to cut off their squadrons in detail by the manœuvres of a minute and captious criticism.

Let it be remembered in all cases that to the ancients philosophy was no trifling, merely intellectual pursuit. "Philosophy," says Seneca,[2] "is not a theory for popular acceptance, and aiming at display. It is not in words, but in deeds. Its vocation is not to help us to spend time agreeably, or to remove ennui from our leisure: it moulds and fashions the mind, sets an order in life, directs our actions, points out what ought to be done and to be left undone; it sits at the helm and guides the course when the voyager is perplexed by dangers on either hand. Without it none can live undauntedly, none securely: every hour there occur countless things which call for counsel, and counsel can only be found in philosophy. Some one will say: 'What good can philosophy do me, if fatalism be true? What good can philosophy do me, if God directs the world? What does it avail, if chance is in chief command? For what is fated cannot be changed, and against uncertainties no preparation is possible. Either God has anticipated my purposed plan and settled what I am to do, or

[1] The phrase is from Kant, *Crit. of Pure Reason*.

[2] Seneca, *Epist. Moral.*, II. 4 (Ep. 16).

chance leaves my plan no room.' Be each of these, or all of them together, true, I reply, philosophy is our duty : whether destiny constrains by an inexorable law, or God is judge of the universe and settles its order, or chance irregularly impels and confounds the affairs of man, philosophy ought to be our safeguard. It will encourage us to obey God willingly, to obey fortune without yielding; it will teach to follow God, to put up with chance."

CHAPTER II.

EPICURUS AND HIS AGE.

The founders of the Stoic and Epicurean sects were contemporaries. Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, was a native of the town of Citium, in Cyprus, and was born about the year 359 B.C. He died in 267, at the ripe age of ninety-two. Epicurus was born in 341 B.C., seven years after the death of Plato, and almost twenty years before the death of Aristotle. He died in 270 B.C., at the age of seventy-one. For more than thirty years Zeno and Epicurus were fellow-citizens of Athens, during the period of their manhood and old age. And yet their paths never met, they moved in different orbits. The founder of the Stoic school was a public and popular character. The King of Macedon looked up to him as to a master and a conscience, and the people of Athens not merely evidenced their faith in him by putting the keys of their city into his veteran hands, but publicly decreed him the honours of a golden crown and a national entombment, in consideration of the character of his life and teaching. Very different was the lot of Epicurus. He and his friends lived in quiet, unostentatious privacy. They were barely heard of by the mass of their contemporaries. Kings and common-

wealths belonged to another order of things, removed from their interests and sympathies.

> Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
> They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Epicurus was the son of Neocles and Chærestrata. The name of his father, being the same as that of the father of the great statesman Themistocles, suggested a couplet of the poet Menander where he contrasts the son of Neocles who freed his country from slavery, with him who freed it from foolishness. The precise spot where Epicurus was born it is impossible with complete certainty to determine. He was an Athenian, and belonged in particular to the little village or dêmos of Gargettos, about seven miles north-east of Athens. But it is most probable that he first saw the light in the island of Samos. In the year 365, twenty-four years before the birth of Epicurus, the Athenian general Timotheus had attacked Samos, which was then hostile to Athens and acting in the interests of the Persians. After the conquest of the island, several of the natives who belonged to the hostile party were expelled by the general, and their lands were assigned to Athenian colonists,[1] who, it appears, gradually encroached upon their neighbours, till there was scarcely one of the original landholders left. Among the Athenians who sought to better their fortune in Samos were the parents of Epicurus. For Athens had lost the commercial and maritime supremacy in the Levant, for which she had struggled

[1] Diodorus Siculus, XVIII. 8, 7; Strabo, XIV. 1, 18.

a century before in the Peloponnesian war, and still more recently in the year 378. By the middle of the fourth century, B.C. 355, she was forced to surrender her claims to the mastery of the seas. The island of Rhodes on the south-east, and the town of Byzantium to the north-east of the Ægean Sea, became the main seats of commercial activity.

There was great depression both in the public and private finances of Athens, and the opportunity of finding relief in a colony was too tempting to be resisted. Neocles, the father of Epicurus, was one of two thousand Athenians who hoped to find an allotment of land in the island of Samos,—a beautiful and fertile region of about thirty miles in length and of an average breadth of eight miles. By profession, Neocles is said to have been a schoolmaster : at any rate, he kept an elementary school,—a business which then, as now, seems to have been one of the last shifts of impecuniosity in a new settlement. The family evidently was not in a brilliant position. According to the gossip of a later day, the youthful Epicurus was his father's assistant in the school, and helped to prepare the ink for the use of the pupils. But if the function of elementary teacher was attributed to the father, even less creditable was the vocation assigned by rumour to the mother of Epicurus. She was a minister in the service of foreign superstitions, of a church or chapel unauthorized by public or national establishment. Regarded half as a witch or sorceress, and half as a deaconess in a dubious conventicle of low and probably superstitious worshippers,

she was no doubt scarcely a creditable parent in the eyes of the world. And at these rites, too, Epicurus was present as a boy helping his mother.[1]

It is very likely that these stories—reminding the classical student of the picture drawn of the youth of an Athenian orator by a rival contemporary who sought to blast his fame—are complete fabrications. The friends of Epicurus on the other hand, laid some stress on his descent from the Philaidæ, the family from which Pericles too had sprung. Both statements may have some truth in them. If one stops at the right place in genealogy, a creditable ancestry is always obtainable. And, on the other hand, it is not inconceivable that even in boyhood Epicurus was placed in antagonism to the dominant aristocracy of his time, no less in his religious associations than in his social circumstances. We know enough of Greek history in this period to be aware that the national gods had formidable rivals in a number of foreign deities, mainly of Oriental origin. In the port of Athens, in Rhodes, and other commercial centres, the existence of religious societies is revealed to us by the monumental stones which preserve the record of their constitution, the duties of their members, and scattered incidents in their history.[2] Very probably these were haunts of superstition; but they were also guilds and brotherhoods of religion, with a domestic and social, no less than

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 2–4.

[2] Foucart, *Les Associations Religieuses chez les Grecs*. Paris, 1873.

an ecclesiastical character, and by their means the stranger, the outcast, and the poor found compensation for their exclusion from civic ceremonial and festivity in these small chapels and more limited congregations, where they had a temple-worship and a litany of their own. Epicurus from his birth was outside the pale within which national idiosyncrasy and political pride confined their religious and their moral standards.

In his eighteenth year he went to Athens to take his place amongst his countrymen. At that period of his life every young Athenian presented himself before the members of his dêmos or parish, and after an examination, which in older days had been intended to test the qualifications of the candidate to sustain his post in the national army, but was probably now little more than a form, he was "confirmed" as an aspirant citizen. On that occasion he took what was called the oath of the Ephêbi to be true to the service and interests of his fatherland.[1] When Epicurus in this way was enrolled as a member of the Athenian State-and-Church,—confirmed, as it were, as a citizen,—one of his comrades in the rite of initiation, and one almost to be styled his college-friend, was the great poet of the New Comedy, Menander. In later days the period of novitiate between the eighteenth and the twentieth year was a time when the young Ephêbi enjoyed the privileges and submitted to the restraints of a sort of student

[1] Pollux, VIII. 105.

and college life. But it was probably not as yet customary to give to the period of opening manhood a training so predominantly intellectual as it came to be in the early centuries of our era.[1] And, at any rate, the times were evil. In 323 B.C., when the news of Alexander the Great's death was wafted to Greece, the Athenians, in the restless spirit which often had led them to glory, took up arms to recover their own independence and to liberate Greece from Macedonian rule. The troops which Alexander had disbanded on the completion of the conquest of Persia had gathered in great numbers at Taenarum, in the south of the Peloponnesus; and the money which Harpalus, a runaway viceroy of Alexander's, had brought to Athens, easily enabled the Athenians to equip from these warriors, impatient for employment, a force sufficient for the moment to paralyze Antipater, who held Macedonia in the interest of the "kings," the sons of Alexander the Great. But in no long time Antipater, whom the vigorous outburst of the war had shut up in the town of Lamia, in the south of Thessaly, was able to resume the offensive with his reinforcements; and in the year 322 B.C., the seaport-heights of Munychia and the Piræus, the harbour-forts of Athens, were garrisoned by Macedonian troops.

Nor was this all. The regent of the Empire and administrator of the young princes, acting on the

[1] Capes, *University Life in Ancient Athens*, Lond. 1877; Dumont (A.), *Essai sur l'Éphébie Attique*, 2 tomes, Paris, 1876.

advice of Antipater, determined to break the insurrectionary spirit of the Athenian democracy. The civic franchise was restricted to those who had property to the amount of at least two thousand drachmæ: and it was openly suggested to the poor disfranchised Athenians that it might be well for them to seek their fortune in the towns lately founded by Macedonian kings on the coast of Thrace. More than half of the existing citizens seem to have been thus exiled. And Athens, restored to only a communal or municipal independence, was left in the control of the propertied and aristocratic classes, who loved peace and so were well content with the supremacy of Macedon. But Perdiccas, the administrator of the young princes, and Antipater went further. They restored Samos from the possession of Athens to its old proprietors, who had been banished from their native island more than forty years: and the Athenian settlers were forced to quit the ground they had usurped, and seek a refuge on other shores.[1]

Neocles and his family—for Epicurus had at least three brothers—went from Samos to the neighbouring coast of Asia Minor. They seem to have found some difficulty in fixing on a home. Colophon and Teos are two places mentioned as their abodes:[2] the former is said to have been the spot where Epicurus found his father on his return from Athens. Colophon not long before was the home of a lyric poet of some note,

[1] Diodorus Siculus, XVIII. 18; Plutarch, *Phocion*, 28.

[2] Strabo, XIV. 1, 18; Diogenes Laert., X. 1.

Hermesianax, who gave to three books of his odes the name of Leontion, his lady-love: a name which will afterwards recur in the history of Epicurus. Whether the lady of Hermesianax was also the lady of Epicurus is one of those questions which are apparently unanswerable, and probably for that reason excite the curiosity of a leisured fancy and afford ample ground for the grave disquisitions of philologists. Nor do we know how long Epicurus stayed in Colophon or Teos. At any rate, we know that about his thirtieth year he was temporarily settled at Mitylene, in the island of Lesbos. And it was at Mitylene that he first came forward as a recognised philosopher.

Of his apprenticeship to philosophy we have but scanty hints. It was told by his friends that the future philosopher had betrayed himself even in his schoolboy days. As he read the "Theogony" of Hesiod with his tutor, he stumbled at the line which told how the origin of all things was from chaos. "But what," asked the young Epicurus, "was the origin of chaos?" The teacher, who did not profess anything beyond grammar, naturally declined to solve the difficulty, and recommended Epicurus, it is said, to consult the professors of philosophy.[1] His chief teachers in that department are said to have been Nausiphanes, a Democritean, of Teos, and Pamphilus, a Platonist of Samos.[2]

Of Nausiphanes, fortunately, we have some slight

[1] Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.*, x. 19.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, x. 8 (14).

record. He seems to have taught at Teos, a place which on the collapse of the Ionic revolt (about 494 B.C.) had been brought into very intimate relations with Abdêra, the native city of the philosopher Democritus, the founder of the Atomic School. But Nausiphanes, though styled a Democritean, had had for his immediate master a man rather different from Democritus.[1] This was Pyrrho of Elis, the noted Sceptic of antiquity. But it is somewhat misleading to term him a sceptic, in the modern sense of that term. He had seen the revolutions of Greek philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to their followers; he had accompanied the army of Alexander the Great to India, and had learned the falsity of much in dogmatic philosophy, and the uncertainty of much that seems fixed in morals. The lesson taught by Pyrrho intellectually was suspension of judgment; morally, it was imperturbability. "Whoever desires to attain true happiness, must," said Pyrrho, "find an answer to the three following questions.[2] What is the constitution of things? What ought to be our attitude towards them? And, lastly, What will be the consequence to those who adopt this right attitude?" The first question we cannot answer, and therefore in the second place we must simply reserve our judgment and refuse to fix anything absolutely. We can only say: 'Probably,' and 'It seems so.' In this way we attain an undisturbed repose of mind. Such a scep-

[1] Diogenes Laertius, IX. 11, 7.

[2] Eusebius, *Præpar. Evangel.*, XIV. 18, 1.

ticism, if it checks curious questioning, does not disturb our practical life: we can continue to act, though we act only according to probabilities.

Pyrrho himself wrote nothing, and those who were curious to know something of the doctrines of one whose fame was widely spread had to seek their information from his pupils. Such were Timon and Nausiphanes: and the latter used to relate in later years how Epicurus had again and again questioned him about the habits and tenets of the great sceptic.[1] But Epicurus could hardly have been in the ordinary sense a pupil of Nausiphanes; he must indeed have been rather older than his alleged master. Nausiphanes, however, it seems, claimed him as a disciple, much to the annoyance of Epicurus, who acknowledges that he did occasionally drop into the lecture-room of the "Mollusc" as he calls him, and found him expounding his doctrines to a few bibulous lads. And from all that one can learn about Epicurus, it is plain that he could not have been much of any man's pupil. He claims that he was self-taught; and that was in the largest sense true. That the contemporary philosophy did not influence him, it would be absurd to maintain; but his acquaintance with it was evidently confined to the main doctrines, in which it was popularly recognised. Where he did read was in the now perished writings of the philosophers anterior to Plato and Aristotle; for these last, in the main, he simply ignored. From Democritus he directly or in-

[1] Diogenes Laertius, IX. 11, 4 (64). Cf. Sext. Emp., p. 599 (ed. Bekker).

directly gained his physical theories; and a good authority informs us that his favourite philosophers were two of these pre-Socratic speculators, Anaxagoras, and Archelaus, the so-called teacher of Socrates.[1] What he found in them to admire we can only guess: probably the physical and mechanical explanation of the universe and of man, in which Anaxagoras seems to have abounded. At Mitylene disciples gathered round him; and at Lampsacus, a ferry-town on the Dardanelles opposite to the modern town Gallipoli (the city of Callias), where he spent another year or two, he gradually became a recognised head of a philosophic school. He came, says an ancient writer, to look upon Lampsacus almost as his country.[2] The best of its inhabitants became his friends: particularly Idomeneus, and Leonteus with his wife Themista, Polyænus and Metrodôrus; and the friendships then formed lasted through life. In later days he kept up a correspondence with them, as with the philosophers at Mitylene; and twice or thrice crossed the sea to visit the scenes where disciples first believed in him. If Athens was the Mecca of this prophet, Lampsacus was his Medina.

In 307 B.C. Epicurus settled in Athens. Since he had left it, in 322, its fortunes had not been brilliant, but they had given it tranquillity. In the year after the death of Antipater, in 319, it had been for a while drawn into the whirlpool of Macedonian politics.

[1] Diogenes Laertius, X. 7 (12).
[2] Strabo, XIII. 1, 19.

Enticed by the promises of Polysperchon, who hoped to enlist the democratic passions of the Greek cities on his side, Athens rushed from one political extreme to another. The violent reaction was not accomplished without bloodshed. Old Phocion and his conservative associates in the Macedonian interest fell a victim to fanatical and patriotic republicans, who doubted the honesty of his cautious policy. He and his friends were executed as traitors. But the hopes then encouraged of a renewal of Athenian sovereignty in Greece were soon disappointed. In 318, Athens was at the mercy of Cassander: and that prince, who not long afterwards made himself undisputed master of Macedon by the assassination of all the seed-royal of Alexander, continued to hold the city tight in his hands by means of the Macedonian garrison in the ports. From 318 to 307, the practical ruler of Athens under the Macedonian king was Demetrius of Phalerum. Under his government the city enjoyed considerable material prosperity: commerce flourished, and the three hundred and sixty statues which are reported to have been erected throughout Attica in honour of Demetrius himself are a proof that art was not neglected. Demetrius was at once a scholar and a man of the world.[1] In early life it is said he had exhibited the simplicity of a hermit in his fare of island cheese and pickled olives. But prosperity apparently changed him: he became

[1] Athenæus, XII. 542; Diogenes Laertius, V. 5; Diodorus Siculus, XVIII. 74; Strabo, IX. 398.

a beau, devoting art and time to elaborating his personal appearance, and did not scruple to give free play to his sensual proclivities. Under such a *régime* public morality and spirit necessarily deteriorated. The fashionable philosopher of the period was a pupil of Aristotle, Theophrastus, the friend of Cassander and of Ptolemy. Two thousand disciples, it is said, flocked to hear his lectures.[1] Even more vehement was the attraction exercised by Stilpon, of Megara, when he visited Athens : the very workmen flocked from their workshops and ran to look at him.

Probably, however, with all these disadvantages, Athens may have seemed to some a more desirable residence than most of the Greek towns. Its old glories still won for it occasional reverence from the potentates of Asia and Egypt. In most of the other communities of Greece revolution was in permanence. Each party, as it gained the supremacy, in its turn massacred the prominent members of the opposition. Tyrants in name or in reality ; foreign adventurers in search of power or pleasure ; mercenary troops with no national ties and no respect for law, morality, or religion ; exiles saturated with the gathered hatred of years : these and such like inflammable materials throughout Greece made the life of a peaceful inhabitant impossible. With no security for life and property, poverty and lawlessness spread apace ; and the young not unfrequently grew up indifferent to their country, sceptical of their religion, bent upon

[1] Diogenes Laertius, v. 2, 5 (37). [2] Ibid. II. 11.

enjoyment, and seasoning sensuality with a dash of literary and philosophic cultivation. Such, in its worst aspects, was Greece in the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. One fact alone may tell of the misery of the time. In the year 308, a Cyrenean adventurer advertised his intention of leading a horde across the deserts against Carthage, which was then staggering under the blows of another adventurer of great ability and greater unscrupulousness, Agathocles, the despot of Syracuse. Numbers of Athenians and other Greeks joined the enterprise. For, says the historian, the ceaseless wars and rivalry of princes had brought all Greece low and made it feeble, so that men not merely looked to an expected good fortune, but were influenced by the prospect of release from their present ills.[1]

The arrival of Epicurus in Athens in 307 was almost simultaneous with a change in the situation of Athens, by which the city was more openly involved in the wars between the successors of Alexander. Each of them hoped to win Athens to his side. The material support which she could render was indeed small, but the intellectual *prestige* of her name was a tower of strength for her friends. Macedonia had hitherto held her in tutelage by means of Demetrius of Phalerum. In 307, he was forced to abandon the city and flee to Egypt, before the attack of another Demetrius, the Besieger (*Poliorcêtes*), the son of Antigonus. Antigonus had made himself one of the

[1] Diodorus Siculus, xx. 40.

most potent of the generals, who, after Alexander's death, gradually dared, in name as in fact, to divide his empire among themselves. From his seat of government in Phrygia he kept up an incessant and generally successful system of encroachment upon his neighbours, Ptolemy in Egypt, Seleucus in Babylon, and Lysimachus in Thrace. His son, Demetrius, is one of the most remarkable characters in the age of Epicurus. In him was combined the intellectual ingenuity of the Greek with the despotic sensuality of an Oriental sultan. He seems to have been possessed by a genuine enthusiasm for Athens.

Athens, restored to nominal liberty by the young Demetrius, fell into an intoxication of flattery. Demetrius and his father were proclaimed kings: they were worshipped as the "gods and saviours" of the state; a priest for their godheads' service was yearly appointed; their images were woven on the great veil of the Parthenon amongst the pictures of the other gods; two new tribes were formed and named after the liberating kings; one of the months (Munychion) had its name changed to Demetrion; and the last day of the month was styled Demetrias.[1] But perhaps the best evidence of the worship and fêtes which attended Demetrius in Athens is an ode or hymn sung, on one occasion, in his honour. "For other gods," it says, "are either far away, or have no ears to hear, or are not at all, or have no mind or care of us whatever: but thee we see before us, no god of

[1] Plutarch, *Demetrius*, c. 10.

wood or stone, but a real god and true."[1] This burst of devotion to their saviour, whilst it shows the degradation of religious feeling and the lapse of the national faith, and whilst it is a bitter accusation against the rule of the Macedonian, proves also how completely the old spirit of Athens had sunk, and how hopeless was its political regeneration.

But the relief from Macedonian occupation was not lasting. Demetrius was called away by the other engagements of his father's policy, and Athens had to sustain, unaided, a combat with the King of Macedon. It was, probably, at this time that a curious incident in the history of philosophical teaching took place. The democracy, which was now in power, looked with suspicion on the philosophers, who were mostly conservative in their sympathies, and who, at least the Peripatetics, were attached to the Macedonian rule. Accordingly, a law was passed forbidding any one, under pain of death, from opening a philosophic school without the consent of the supreme council and people. Theophrastus, and, probably, other philosophers, rather than comply with the order, left the city: but Athens was too dependent on her schools, or the Macedonian party soon raised its head; at any rate, the law was repealed next year, and the offended philosophers returned to their schools.[2]

At Athens Epicurus purchased a house and garden. The former, at least, was in the quarter of the city

[1] Athenæus, VI. 253.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, V. 38; Athenæus, XIII. 610; Pollux, IX. 42.

known as Melité, the elevated south-western district between the Acropolis and the Piræus. This garden was the head-quarters of the friends of Epicurus when they visited Athens, and became the hearth and home of the school which gathered round him. If we could believe one account of the matter derived from an author[1] who depended too much on compilations from books, one might fancy Epicurus and his company settled in a town-house with a garden around it, introducing into ancient life a sweet odour of the country, and anticipating the coming of a time when cities would no longer be fortresses, but blossom out into a variegated scene of roofs embowered in leaves. That such a custom came in as the peace of the Roman Empire encompassed a larger sphere is well known; and if Epicurus did surround his home with a garden, he did what seems to have been done before his time. But one does not feel certain that the house and the garden were contiguous: on the contrary, the reverse, as we shall see, is probably, the truth. We are told that the garden cost eighty minæ, *i.e.* about £320; but the information scarcely enables us to fix the size of the property.

For a period of about thirty-six years Athens was the home of Epicurus. He never during that time took part in public life, never solicited those municipal posts which were open to the ambitious. A calm, unostentatious life devoted to study of the nature of the world and morality, and enlivened by the companionship of

[1] Pliny, *Natural Hist.*, XIX. 51; but see Isæus, V. 11.

like-minded men and women, and by correspondence with those who, in other places, were aiming at the same ends, was the life of Epicurus. In thus standing aside from the business of the commonwealth he ran counter to the teaching of some earlier philosophers, though not, perhaps, to the practice either of Plato or Aristotle. But the altered situation ought to be taken into account. The Athens of his time was no longer a sovereign state, ruling imperially over the islands of the Archipelago, nor was it the mere municipality which it afterwards became under the Roman Empire. Public life in such ambiguous circumstances was unreal and deceptive. The real springs of political force were to be found in the diplomatic intrigues of royal courts. Accordingly Epicurus, like Socrates before him, preferred to stand away out of the giddy whirl of politics, and devoted his best efforts to give a simpler and more natural tone to the aims and aspirations of individual life. It scarcely needs any argument to show that in such a season he chose the better part. In this time of instability, to act beneficially through the medium of politics, was only possible for a king or potentate possessing the rare desire to ameliorate and humanize his people. But men out of power could still show

> How small of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.

In religious matters Epicurus was not a dissenter from the national faith. He worshipped the gods of his community and his age, and took part in the

observance of religious services and of festival pageantry. So, too, he instituted services to commemorate the names of some of his beloved dead. From neither the dead nor the gods did he expect any reward. But to both he felt an overflowing of a full heart, gladly showing forth in act its sense of fellowship and kindred with the august and distant gods and the near and dear departed. We are told with pride, too, by Philodêmus, the contemporary of Cicero, that Epicurus was never molested by the comic poets,—never banished or put to death as an atheist and infidel.[1] Philodemus was, no doubt, thinking of Socrates; but he hardly realized how different Athens was in the two periods, and how very great was the contrast between Socrates, freely discussing on the streets and squares, with all comers, on all topics, and Epicurus conversing quietly with his friends in his garden.

Thus tranquilly passed these thirty-six years in Athens. The position of Epicurus was very unlike that of his contemporaries in philosophy. Some of them like Zeno, the Stoic, and the heads of the Peripatetic school, Theophrastus, Strato, Lyco, and Demetrius were on terms of friendship and familiarity with the princes and great men of the time. It was not a rare or surprising event to see philosophers acting as the ambassadors of their native state, in its transactions with foreign powers. Thus Menedêmus, of Eretria, was entrusted by his fellow-citizens with

[1] Philodemus, *De Pietate* (ed. Gomperz), p. 93.

the plenipotentiary disposition of their town; he was sent on embassies to foreign kings, such as Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Demetrius; and the young king of Macedonia was proud to subscribe himself as his pupil. Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt had been a scholar of Strato of Lampsacus. And Arcesilaus, the Platonist, though he declined the efforts made to get him to meet the King of Macedon, was an intimate friend of the captains or governors who held garrison in the Piræus, and stood well with Eumenes, the son of Philetærus.[1]

Another class of philosophers established themselves in the favour of the successors of Alexander on less equal terms than those claimed by the chiefs of Platonism and Aristotelianism. Men like Theodôrus, the witty Cyrenaic, and Crates the Cynic, with his Cynic wife, Hipparchia, made themselves regarded as an acquisition at the kingly courts by their powers of repartee, and the reputation of their *bons mots*. Their jests at the orthodox beliefs and their unblushing disregard of conventional standards, perhaps increased the piquancy of their company. Thus, when Stilpo was asked by Crates if the worship and offerings of the faithful gave the gods any satisfaction, he only replied by saying that the question was one not to be asked on the highway, but when they were alone. Another of these scoffers, Bion of Borysthenes, acquired quite a reputation by his religious indifference, though when sickness visited

[1] Diogenes Laertius, II. 17; V. 3; IV. 6, 39.

him he sought relief in the use of amulets, and abjured all the errors of his tongue. The court of Lysimachus, prince of Thrace, seems to have been a favourite resort of emancipated free-thinkers, both male and female. Hipparchia, the Cynic, and Theodôrus, the Cyrenaic and professed atheist, sometimes met there. Theodorus was the typical representative of the advanced thinkers of the time. He professed open contempt for the popular theology; he was a thorough cosmopolitan; and morality he regarded as one of those conventions which the elect spirits of society might treat as past and obsolete, for all but the narrow-minded Philistines and *bourgeoisie*. Before kings and people he was equally careless of his language. Athens was shocked at his open irreligion, and Mithras, the chamberlain of King Lysimachus, had to call him to account for his want of respect.[1]

While it continued to be the chosen home of Epicurus and his followers, Athens passed through a series of vicissitudes. Demetrius Poliorcêtes, its liberator from the Macedonian yoke, had been forced to withdraw his help, and as soon as he had gone, Cassander, the king of Macedon, renewed his efforts to impose his supremacy upon Athens. But in the hour of their peril the Athenians cried aloud for help to their former saviour, and in 303 B.C. Demetrius re-appeared in the Athenian territory, and succeeded in driving the Macedonian armies to the north of the pass of Thermopylæ. In consequence of this relief,

[1] Diogenes Laertius, II. 8, 16; VI. 7.

the Athenians were reckless with delight, and their gratitude found vent in a shameful servility. The Parthenon, the temple of the maiden goddess, was in part assigned to the prince as a lodging, and there for a short time he kept up a succession of imperial revelries with his mistresses and the *artistes* of his court. But these hours of intoxication were soon followed by a terrible awakening. In 301 B.C. Demetrius and his father succumbed under the combined attack of the other "kings," as the successors of Alexander had lately come to style themselves. After the battle of Ipsus, in which Antigonus lost his life, Lysimachus became master of both sides of the sea of Marmora, and Demetrius found that the Athenians were not disposed to afford him any shelter or aid in his misfortunes. Athens, with the general selfishness of the age, declared itself neutral, and proceeded to rearrange its own affairs. But this was now in reality impossible. Where the aims of those who dreamed of maintaining for Athens an independent existence and policy clashed with the interests of the adherents of the Macedonian power and of those who supported the plans of other princes, faction was inevitable; and about 297 B.C. Athens fell into the hands of a popular chief, called Lachares. This man is described by an ancient writer as of all tyrants known the most savage towards men and the most unscrupulous towards God.[1] Demetrius Poliorcêtes, now that Cassander was dead, determined again to

[1] Pausanias, I. 25; Polyænus, III. 7; Athenæus, IX. 405.

try to get a footing in Athens. He invested the city by sea and land, and cut off all provisions from the inhabitants. A dreadful famine in the city was the consequence; the necessaries of life began to fail. A bushel of salt sold for twenty shillings, and for a peck of wheat people were willing to pay more than ten pounds. In one house a father and son were sitting in moody despair: suddenly a dead mouse fell from the roof, and the two wretched creatures sprang up and fought over the tiny prey. Epicurus and his companions managed to subsist on beans, counted out in equal numbers to each member of the household.[1] Even the tyrant suffered in the general distress. At length he fled,—not, it is said, without plundering the temple,—and the city fell into the power of Demetrius. The trembling citizens expected vengeance for their falling-off from his side some years ago; but Demetrius, who had always a softness for Athens, was content to ignore their insincerity, and to secure himself against any repetition of it by fortifying and garrisoning the Museum rock in the city, as well as the maritime forts of Piræus and Munychia (295 B.C.)

For the next seven years, during which, by one of those strange vicissitudes so common in that period, Demetrius held the throne of Macedonia, Athens remained tranquil under the Macedonian garrisons at her gates. But in 288 B.C., when Demetrius was forced to abandon his Macedonian kingdom, the old Athenian love of independence revived, and young

[1] Plutarch, *Demetrius*, c. 34.

and old alike, under the leadership of Olympiodôrus, rose in rebellion and defeated the Macedonian garrison when it attacked them, and captured the fort on Museum hill, though the garrisons in the forts still remained. Athens, thus liberated, by the help of Pyrrhus of Epirus, showed its changed circumstances by setting up honorary decrees as a tribute to the great orators who had urged the state a generation before to resist the power of Macedon. But the spirit of ancient independence was gone. It was to foreign kings that Athens was indebted both for its nominal independence and for its very subsistence. The princes of the Crimea made it frequent gifts of wheat. Foreign patronage is the evidence given by the honorary decrees to the kings of the Bosphorus and of Pæonia, to Lysimachus of Thrace, Pyrrhus of Epirus, and Ptolemy Philadelphus of Egypt.

In the last years of Epicurus Athens lived at peace, with Macedonian garrisons at her gates; in the Piræus, in Munychia, and in Salamis. In Macedonia, Antigonus Gonatas, the son of Demetrius, had succeeded to his father's kingdom in 279, and kept up with Zeno and some others of the philosophers a friendly intercourse. With Epicurus, who lived out of the sphere of politics, and with Arcesilaus, who banished politics from the Academy, he had no dealings. Greece, under Macedonia, like Judea under the Romans, was not exactly the place where the king and the philosopher could meet on fair terms.

Epicurus had been from infancy of rather feeble health. In his boyhood, it is said, he was so weak

that he had to be lifted down from his chair, and so blear-eyed that he could not bear to look upon the sun or fire. His skin, too, was so tender that any dress beyond a mere tunic was unbearable. Such is the account quoted by a lexicographer of the Byzantine period :[1] and the maladies of Epicurus are treated as an anticipatory judgment of heaven upon him for his alleged impieties. Curiously enough, the biographer of Jeremy Bentham tells us how Bentham was so weak at seven years of age that he could not support himself on tiptoe, and he spoke of himself as the feeblest of feeble boys :[2] but the greatest bigot would hardly go so far out of his way as to suggest that Bentham's views richly deserved such an organization as his portion. It was also suggested that Epicurus's ill-health was due to his loose and luxurious life. One of his pupils apparently wrote in refutation of these charges.

In the year 270 B.C. Epicurus died at Athens. For a fortnight before his end he had suffered much from obstruction by stone in the bladder.[3] But up to the last moment his intellect was unimpaired: he dwelt both in conversation and his letters, on the memories of philosophic fellowship

> When each by turns was guide to each,
> And fancy light from fancy caught,
> And thought leapt out to wed with thought
> Ere thought could wed itself with speech.

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[1] Suidas, under the word "Epicurus."

[2] Bentham's works, vol. x., p. 31.

[3] Diogenes Laertius, x. 15; cf. fragment restored by Gomperz in *Hermes*, v., p. 391.

His last intellectual care was for his doctrines—he bade his friends remember what he had taught. His last personal care was for the children of a disciple who had died before him, and for whom he asked his benevolent friends to continue the attentions and support which they had hitherto given to himself.

CHAPTER III.

THE EPICUREAN BROTHERHOOD.

"WHEN the stranger," says Seneca, "comes to the gardens on which the words are inscribed, — 'Friend, here it will be well for thee to abide: here pleasure is the highest good,' he will find the keeper of that garden a kindly, hospitable man, who will set before him a dish of barley porridge and water in plenty, and say, 'Hast thou not been well entertained? These gardens do not whet hunger, but quench it: they do not cause a greater thirst by the very drinks they afford, but soothe it by a remedy which is natural and costs nothing. In pleasure like this I have grown old.'"[1] "Epicurus, the Gargettian," says another writer,[2] "cried aloud, and said: 'To whom a little is not enough, nothing is enough. Give me a barley-cake and water, and I am ready to vie even with Zeus in happiness.'" In words like these we have a picture of the garden of Epicurus. At first sight it presents the idea of a society of ascetics rather than of voluptuaries, and of dietetic reformers rather than philosophers. "We ought,"

[1] Epist. Moral., II. 9 (21), 10.
[2] Ælian, *Var. Hist.*, IV. 13.

says Epicurus, "to be on our guard against any dishes which, though we are eagerly desirous of them beforehand, yet leave no sense of gratitude behind after we have enjoyed them."[1] Instead of the revelry and dainty dishes which we should probably associate with the name of epicure, we find a meal of plain bread and water, with half a pint of light wine occasionally added. "Send me," says Epicurus, in one of his letters, "send me some cheese of Cythnos, so that when I will I may fare sumptuously."[2] The life of the Epicurean circle attempted to inculcate plain living, not as a duty, but as a pleasure. Probably, if we believe the stories of the ill-health of Epicurus and his friends, there may have been something of a dietetic experiment in this behaviour. The society was not, indeed, in principle vegetarian; on the contrary, they justified the use of animal flesh for food, much on the same metaphysical ground as Spinoza afterwards employed; *i.e.*, the immense generic difference which they believed to separate man from the brute. But in practice, their diet, like that of so many other philosophers, was mainly vegetarian. Their temperate habits seem to have drawn down upon them the jokes of the comic poets. "Your water-drinking," says a character in one of their plays,[3] makes you useless to the state: whilst by my potations I increase the revenue." Philemon puts the following words into the mouth of one of his charac-

[1] Porphyry, *De Abstinentia*, I. 53.
[2] Diogenes Laertius, X. 6, 11.
[3] Bato in Athenæus, IV. 163.

ters :—" This fellow is bringing in a new philosophy : he preaches hunger, and disciples follow him. They get but a single roll, a dried fig to relish it, and water to wash it down." [1] So, too, when Juvenal draws his sketch of the real wants of human nature, he identifies what is required to free us from cold and thirst and hunger, with the conveniences which Epicurus in his little garden found sufficient.[2]

To place this aspect of Epicureanism in the foreground seems justified by the whole tenor of the system. To them the life of man was a life at once of the body and the soul. Epicurus declared himself unable to understand what was meant by a pleasure where the body and its various senses were utterly and entirely ignored. The common doctrine of so many ancient philosophers, that the senses and the instincts must be checked, repressed or ignored,—that apathy, or the absence of sense and feeling, is the ideal perfection of the sage,—was a doctrine against which he always contended. It was easy for opponents to say that such a protest opened the door to sensuality, and to hint that she was even asked to come in. But it is easy to see that the point with Epicurus was that philosophy must keep constantly in view the fact, that humanity is embodied in flesh and blood, and that the body, if ignored in theory, will somehow manage to avenge itself in practice. He had come to know the experimental truth of the proposition,

[1] Philemon in Clemen. Alexandr. Stromat., II. 493.
[2] Juvenal, *Sat.* XIV. 319.

that what we are depends so much on what we eat. And the words of Metrodôrus his disciple, which gave so much offence to delicate ears,—when he says, that "the doctrine which follows nature has for its main object the stomach,"[1] were probably not so heinous in their meaning as some critics supposed. A good digestion is the basis of a happy life: and dyspepsia is the root of all evils. This aphorism, paradoxical and one-sided as it may be, is not necessarily vicious. Plato had already partly recognised the truth of the observation; and one may pardon the emphasis laid on the doctrine, if we assume the speaker to have been somewhat of a valetudinarian. It is one of the tendencies of our day to lay stress, probably an exaggerated stress, on the personal care of health, and to attach enormous importance to a reasonable diet. The moral doctrines of Plato and Aristotle had been a trifle too exacting for humanity: they elevated virtue, as Descartes says, to a great height, but they scarcely showed how the height could be scaled.[2] Epicurus comes and begins at the beginning: a simple and natural life with simple enjoyments is his ideal. If we remember, too, that according to the Epicurean theory pleasure is defined as the complete removal of the painful state, and that, once achieved, the pleasure can never be intensified, but only varied by any subsequent additions, we can understand how Epicurus bids his friends to rest content with simple

[1] Athenæus, VII. 279.

[2] Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode.*

fare. Costly fare only gives a character of variety and multiplicity to the enjoyment which it cannot increase.

Who were the members of this society? the guests who sought the hospitality of the sage? the friends who permanently remained with him? The brotherhood was not a fixed and stationary band. Freely, they went and came to hear and see their teacher. Foremost of them all in the affections of the master was Metrodôrus. It was at Lampsacus that Metrodôrus, who must have then been about twenty years only, first came into contact with Epicurus. It seems to have been a case of love at first sight, as it were, and the union between them became so close that the two clung to each other like an elder and a younger brother, and Metrodôrus never was absent from the circle save for six months, while he paid a visit to his native town. Epicurus was never tired of praising his friend for his goodness and unwearied spirit. He married Leontion, another disciple of the garden, and died at the age of fifty-three, seven years before Epicurus, leaving behind him a son and a daughter to the care of the survivor. His brother Timocrates was for awhile another of the band, but he ultimately became a renegade and an opponent. His sister Batis was married to Idomeneus, another disciple, also belonging to Lampsacus, and of some note as an historian; another brother is also mentioned. A fourth disciple from the same place was Polyænus, who is said to have been before his conversion a notable mathematician. From Mitylene came the successor

of Epicurus in the headship, Hermarchus. He was the son of poor parents, and had begun life by the study of rhetoric, but afterwards distinguished himself as a philosopher. To Lampsacus, too, belonged Leonteus and his wife Themista. Their son was named after their teacher. From Lampsacus also came Colôtes, of whom it is told that when first he heard Epicurus expounding the natural system, he fell at his feet and did him reverence; whereupon Epicurus, not to be outdone, worshipped and complimented him in return. It would have made, says Plutarch in a scoffing mood, an excellent subject for a picture.[1]

There were other members of the society, such as Pythocles, a young man, on whom Epicurus had built high hopes of future excellence. Leontion has been already mentioned. With her and Themista Epicurus kept up a correspondence, as he did with his other friends. Leontion belonged to the class of women whom the Greeks termed female comrades—the same class to which Aspasia, the morganatic wife of Pericles, had belonged. Of her history and character we know almost nothing. That she possessed some literary and philosophic abilities may be inferred from the statement that she wrote an essay in criticism of a work by the philosopher Theophrastus.[2] According to the marriage-laws of the old Greek communities, it was impossible for her to form a legiti-

[1] Plutarch, *Adv. Colotem*, c. xvii. 3.

[2] Cicero, *De Naturâ Deorum*, i. 33, 93.

mate union with a citizen. She was excluded from the fashionable and respectable womanhood, and in the *demi-monde* to which she belonged could only win at the best a dubious rank by her wit, her learning, or her beauty. In the constant wars and revolutions which destroyed the male population of many Greek towns of those times, and threw numbers of women destitute upon the world as slaves or as homeless aliens, women of this class must have been numerous. They possessed or acquired qualifications in their intelligence, accomplishments, and knowledge of the world, which made them abler to attract and enchain men than their more respectable and extremely ignorant sisters, who had never left the seclusion of their homes to mingle with the world, and for whom wedlock meant simply an arrangement for housekeeping. To have married an undowered wife would, to an Athenian, have seemed a monstrous impossibility. The readers of Terence (whose originals depict the contemporaries of Epicurus) are aware that a young lady who had been left penniless had no course open except to become an artist, a singer, a player on the flute, or dancer, if she wished to rise above indigence; and thus circumstances forced her into the *demi-monde* of the large towns. But to judge of these *hetæræ*, or emancipated women, we must look at them in the light of their historical surroundings, and not by abstract principles or by considerations derived from modern European morality.

Leontion had become, as far as she apparently

could, the wife, *i.e.*, technically or legally, the concubine of Metrodôrus, whose mother and sister sent congratulations on the occasion of the marriage.[1] But Leontion was not, according to various chroniclers, the only lady to be found among the disciples of Epicurus. Marmarion (or, as she seems more probably named in the manuscripts of Herculaneum, Mammarion or Mammaron),[2] Hedia (Sweet), Erotion (Loveling), and Nikidion (Victorine), are the names given by one writer; another adds Boidion; and a third erroneously inserts Philaenis, among the "young and handsome women," who, as it is phrased, "haunted the garden." Scandal fastened with avidity on these circumstances. Partly, it seems, through the agency of a Stoic, called Diotimus, who bore the Epicureans a bitter grudge, there appeared a collection of fifty letters, purporting to be the correspondence between Epicurus and his mistresses. Leontion was the chief victim of these libels, which human nature unfortunately is inclined to believe must have something in them, once they have been published. What Leontion was like we know not. But we do know that there were two portraits of her known to the historian of ancient art, the elder Pliny. The first is not specially described. But the other depicted Leontion in the attitude of thought.[3] With Mammaron and

[1] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, c. 16.

[2] *Volum. Herculanens.* Collect. Altera, tom. I. p. 149; cf. Oxford Tracings, Papyrus 1005; Spengel in *Philologus* Suppl., vol. ii. p. 534.

[3] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXV. 99 and 144.

the rest scandal was equally busy, telling how each of them was the favourite of one or another of the chief disciples of Epicurus. To these scandals the school opposed in antiquity a unanimous denial, and we have no grounds for refusing to accept their disclaimer. It is one of the regular consequences attending a departure from the standard of social morality, that failure in one department is presumed to carry with it failure in any of the rules of ethics. Nothing is too bad to be believed of such a one. And so later gossip-mongers fastened with avidity on the theme. They drew fancy pictures of the loose society and depraved manners of the garden, and depicted Leontion as an unblushing daughter of sin, and Epicurus as her special paramour. In one of the writers, who wrote letters purporting to be the composition of well-known persons of the past, and sketched novelettes in correspondence, we find Epicurus represented as a hoary valetudinarian sinner, urging his unwelcome love on the young Leontion, who has given her heart and person to another lover.[1] Some enemies of the system were even inclined to attribute the ill-health of its early chiefs to their licentious lives.

These slanders not unnaturally grew up in the minds of those who combined the fact that women were not excluded from the garden, with the open doctrine of the school, that pleasure was the aim of life, and especially with sayings of Epicurus, in which

[1] Alciphron, *Epist.*, ii. 2.

he claimed for our animal nature its right to free development. But there can hardly be a doubt that they are gross exaggerations, springing from that common failing which accuses an intellectual opponent of all manner of vices and immoralities. These meetings, where, as an old French writer says,[1] "the fair sex, despising all that slander and jealousy could say against them, wished to have a share, and grudged men the good fortune of being the sole disciples and hearers of this philosopher," were probably as harmless as other gatherings of unlicensed religious sects, where the suspicion of foes has been ready to suppose all unholy excesses of sensuality. Had the life of Plotinus been written by an enemy instead of a friend, we should have probably heard a very different story about the lady in whose house he lived, her daughter, and the other women who followed his steps. Yet, at the same time, it would be a mistake to suppose that the ideas which chivalry has made familiar to the modern world were present in the Epicurean fold. Such sentiments, elevating womanhood into a religious power, and a symbol of the best and sweetest humanity, were unknown to the ancient world. The Greek world, in particular, never rose much above the naturalistic and practical aspects of conjugal life. Æsthetic emotions and ethical influences were not conceived as any part of the love of woman. All that we can safely affirm of the Epicurean society is, that licentious-

[1] Sorbière, *Lettres et Discours* (lettre 33). Paris, 1660.

ness is unproven. That the purity of womanhood, the dignity of ladyhood, existed in the society otherwise than in the surrounding world is what we must not affirm.

There is another side to the picture, probably equally exaggerated with the last. As that alleged debauchery, so this presents us with a picture of a hospital or infirmary. The chief philosophers in the school are in this account all the victims of some malady, due probably to their own misconduct, and they all die wretchedly, as atheists and infidels ought. An older writer speaks in somewhat milder terms. He tells us what a source of joy and consolation it was to Epicurus to think of three of his friends and disciples, whom he had tended through their sickness, and now fondly recollected when they had departed.[1] His best-loved disciples, Metrodôrus, Polyænus, and Pythocles, died before him. Epicurus having tenderly cared for them, wasted no time in unavailing regrets. A true friendship and a pure love are an imperishable inheritance for the soul who has enjoyed it, and the memory of such concordant lives may be a source of strength and great joy to the survivor. It was one of the sayings of Epicurus, that we are ungrateful to the past in not recalling the blessings we have erewhile experienced, and counting them among our permanent joys. The three brothers of Epicurus, Neocles, Chæredemus, and Aristobulus, also died before him. Perhaps no circum-

[1] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi sec. Epicur.*, c. 5 and 22.

stance connected with his disciples is more noteworthy than the way in which they clung to him and his doctrine. "Great was the reverence of his brothers towards Epicurus," says Plutarch; "their affection and brotherly feeling made them enthusiastic disciples; and even if they were mistaken in the belief, which they had from their very boyhood formed, that there was no one so wise as Epicurus, still, the man who could inspire such a feeling, and those who could feel it, deserve our admiration."[1]

But the real picture was a pleasing one. Friendship was the prevailing spirit of the garden, and knit together its members in every part of the world. A common life supplemented the common doctrine. The pupils, if pupils they may be called, were more the associates and companions of the master than auditors of his lectures. It was their fellowship with their leader which made them great men, and not his instruction merely. They took a deep affectionate interest in all the concerns of one another; and their letters to each other in their temporary absences exhibit the tender domestic tie which bound together the members of the inner circle. One instance may be given. We knew that Epicurus during the second half of his life twice or thrice tempted the dangers of the sea (he was nearly drowned, it seems, on one voyage) to visit his friends in Asia Minor.[2] Among the charred manuscripts recovered from Herculaneum

[1] Plutarch, *De Fraterno Amore*, c. 16.

[2] Plutarch, *Non posse suav. vivi sec. Epicur.*, c. 6.

there is found a mutilated letter apparently written by Epicurus, and apparently addressed to the daughter of Metrodôrus, the young girl for whose welfare he felt anxious on his death-bed. "We have arrived," says the writer, "safe and sound at Lampsacus,—I and Pythocles and Hermarchus and Ctesippus, and there we found Themista and the rest of our friends safe and sound. I hope that you, too, are well, and mamma, and that in all things you are obedient to her and to Papa and Matro, as you used to be. For remember, my bairn, that we are all of us very fond of you—so be obedient to them."[1]

On certain days the community seems to have observed a fast. In a letter to Polyænus, for instance, Epicurus indulges in playful boast that while Metrodôrus has only reduced his expenses to sixpence, he himself has been able to live comfortably on a less sum.[2] The purpose of such abstinence was not ascetic; but to determine on how little it was possible to be happy. A life led on these maxims can scarcely have produced those "fat sleek swine of Epicurus's herd"[3] to which Horace alludes; and one is more inclined to say with Seneca that the pleasure of Epicurus is very "sober and dry,"[4] and "reduced to small and slender dimensions."

In this brotherhood, where reasoning on the aims of life took the place of a lecture, and simple

[1] Ed. by Gomperz in *Hermes*, v. p. 388.

[2] Seneca, *Epist. Mor.*, II. 6 (18), 9.

[3] Horace, Epist., I. 4, 16; Cicero in Pisonem, XVI. 37. Seneca, Dialog., VII. 12, and VII. 13.

meals with kindly converse restrained the furies of controversy, each was his brother's keeper. Even in those early days all were not of one opinion. Leontion and Colôtes are alleged to have had their little errors. When the chiefs of the sect saw such divergence, it was not, however, their way to correct the offender directly. Rather they wrote to another member, exposing and correcting these errors as supposed mistakes of their correspondent. In such a way Leontion saw her mistakes pointed out in a letter of the master to Colôtes.[1] But, on the whole, though there was a certain liberty left on secondary points, the main doctrines of the society were stereotyped. The disciples were recommended to get by rote the fundamental articles or catechism, in which the doctrine was summarized. "Which of you," says Cicero to the Epicureans, "has not learned by rote this catechism?"[2] And in some points, therefore, blind following of the master's authority was preached in the school: his writings, and those of the two other members of the Epicurean triumvirate, were treated as authoritative, as inspired, as a sort of Bible. Thus, in the close of one of the fragments on Rhetoric written by Philodemus, we find that author saying: "If Epicurus and Metrodôrus and Hermarchus declare that there is such an art (as sophistical rhetoric), as we shall point out in the sequel, then those of our sect who write against their view are not very far from

[1] *Volum. Herculan.* (Napol.), Coll. Prior. v. 2. 17.
[2] Cicero, *De Finibus*, II. 20.

deserving the punishment of a parricide."[1] But it was no deterrent from composition that the writer was bound by his creed. "The Epicureans," says Cicero, "do not refrain from writing on the same topics as Epicurus and their old chiefs." On the contrary. When Philodemus is drawing to the close of another treatise, the thought occurs to him, that he may be blamed for undertaking a work on economics. "It is enough for me that Metrodôrus, as well as Epicurus, enjoins and advises and administers more diligently and down to minor points, and even practises what he teaches."[2] But there are many points, it should be added, in which the same writer indicates his divergence from the leaders and teachers of his sect.

It may be asked how was this society maintained? It was not a class of pupils like those which gathered round other philosophers. As Seneca says, it was not the school, but the life in common with Epicurus, which made Metrodôrus and his companions men of note.[3] Some of his followers had suggested that they should throw all their property into a common fund; but Epicurus rejected the suggestion of communism as savouring of distrust and as laying a restraint on freewill offerings. But though the friends did not surrender their goods into a club-property, a number of them paid a voluntary contribution or rate to the head of the school: and we have a letter

[1] *Volum. Herculan.* Coll. Alter. v. 35; pap. 1,427.
[2] *Volum. Herculan.* (Oxon.), I. 104.
[3] Seneca, Epist. VI. 6; cf. XXXIII. 4.

in which he requests that one of these contributors will continue this payment after his death for the benefit of the two orphan children of Metrodôrus, in whom he took an interest.[1] In another letter to his friend Idomeneus, he says: "Send us first-fruits, therefore, unto the tending of the sacred body, both for myself and the children."[2] And, again, he tells some other friends: "Bravely and splendidly you showed care of us in the matter of procuring the corn, and manifested prodigious tokens of your good-will towards me." But the gifts thus rendered were paralleled by other gifts from Epicurus—when he sent wheat or a bushel of barley,[3] as it is sarcastically put, among his needy friends.

The scene, in fact, presented by the history of the Epicurean garden reminds us of the generosity and brotherly charity exhibited by the various congregations of the infant Christian Church: and the letters of Epicurus and his chief followers are not without their analogues in the Epistles of St. Paul. In both there is the same mixture of discourse on high topics, with allusions to humble matters of daily life. We feel in both cases that the members of the sect take a family human interest in the minutest concerns of each other. Such trifles seemed to the dignified and aristocratic ancient critics to be unworthy of a philosopher. But in truth Epicurus came partly to teach the importance of such little things in the

[1] Edited by Gomperz in *Hermes*, v. 391.

[2] Plutarch, *Adv. Colotem.*, c. xviii. 3.

[3] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi*, c. xv. 7–8.

economy of mankind. And his language, which, presented apart from the context, appears often exaggerated and stilted, would probably offer another aspect if we saw the whole. It is one of the great losses, so far as our knowledge of ancient social life is concerned, that the letters of Epicurus to and from friends, which were preserved by his school as carefully as the letters of the Apostles by the Christian Church, have disappeared, leaving hardly a trace behind. They were evidently in existence in the second century of our era, and formed an important element in the literature of Epicureanism.

According to Diogenes, the number of the friends of Epicurus was so great that they could not have been counted by whole cities. We have already spoken of Metrodôrus and his brother Timocrates. The latter did not continue faithful to the cause: he quarrelled with his brother, and the dispute was carried into acrimonious pamphlets. Epicurus tried to affect a reconciliation; but his rebukes had not the desired effect, and the renegade became one of the chief accusers of the life and morality of his former associates.[1] Such charges from friends who have become enemies are never very credible, but in this case they are specially discredited by the common tendency of the ancient world to adopt the language of Billingsgate against an opponent. Mithras the Syrian, steward of Lysimachus, king of Thrace, was another Epicurean who seems to have been a regular

[1] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi*, 1098 B.; 1126 C.

contributor. One of the essays of Epicurus was dedicated to him. On some occasion he was in difficulties at the Piræus, and Epicurus loudly praises Metrodôrus for the goodly and gallant way in which he had gone down to the sea to help him.[1] These and other slight deeds are contemptuously contrasted by Plutarch with the deeds of great generals and statesmen. But it is not perhaps going too far to say that these and other interchanges of benevolence between the members of a sect which did not count many rich or noble, are found entitled to the blessing awarded to the cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple.

The affairs of the brotherhood were considerably affected by a will which Epicurus left behind him.[2] It divided his small fortune in two directions; for the general interest of his society and doctrine, and the special behoof of the orphans of two of his friends. According to the terms of the bequest, deposited in the office of the State archives, the temple of the mother of the gods (Metrôon), his whole property was handed over to two trustees for the following purposes. The garden and its appurtenances, and the school or lecture-room erected in it, were to be held for behoof of Hermarchus, the immediate successor of Epicurus, and for all who might in time follow him in that post. The house in Melité was to be used by Hermarchus and his fellow philosophers as a dwelling during the life of the

[1] Plutarch, *Non posse suaviter vivi*, 1097 A.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, x. 10 (17–22).

former. A sum of money was further placed to the credit of the trustees, who in conjunction with Hermarchus were to divide it in certain portions. One portion was to go to keep up the *fête* celebrated in memory of the departed parents and brothers of Epicurus. Another part went to defray the expenses of the social meetings held annually on the anniversary of the birthday of Epicurus (the 10th of the Attic month Gamêlion), and on the 20th day of every month, in memory of the conjoint names of Epicurus and Metrodôrus. His brothers and his friend Polyænus had also yearly days of remembrance appointed. These provisions for the saints' days of the Epicurean calendar were the general and permanent provisions of the will.

Its special articles enjoined the trustees to be the guardians of a younger Epicurus, son of Metrodôrus, and of the son of Polyænus; as also of the daughter of Metrodôrus. The three children were to be supported, and the girl when she reached marriageable years was to receive a dowry from the fund, and to be married to one of the members of the school selected by Hermarchus. One of the older members of the brotherhood who had left all to follow wisdom with Epicurus, was especially commended to the notice of the trustees. The books of the founder were to pass over to Hermarchus. Finally, three of his bondmen and one bondwoman were granted their freedom.

This testament, which may be compared with others left about the same time by the chiefs of the Peripatetic school, is in many ways noteworthy. Its care

for the young orphans is, in its affectionate decorum, the best refutation of the calumnies raised against Epicurus. His emancipation of the slaves may be paralleled by similar acts in the testaments of Theophrastus, Strato, and Lyco, the three successive heads of the Aristotelian school. One of these slaves, named Mys (Mouse), had been a fellow-worker in philosophy with his master. The distinction in the will between the house in Melité and the garden suggests some difficulties for those who, like Pliny, suppose that the garden lay inside the city. Indeed, from a remark in Cicero, it would seem indubitable that the garden lay on the N.W. of Athens, a little off the road which led to the "Academy" of Plato.[1] In other words, it lay outside the walled city, and like the local seats of two at least of the other schools was an open garden in the suburbs. While Epicurus thus endowed the Epicurean sect, the other sects had done likewise. The will of Theophrastus hands over "the garden and the walk, and the houses by the garden" to certain of his friends for purposes of the common pursuit of philosophy.[2] The garden of Plato similarly served as a meeting-place for his school, who in the next generation after his death began to erect small huts near the abode of their muses.[3] And in both schools common festivals, in the shape of monthly dinners, kept the students together socially. There is thus a pleasing family

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, v. i. 3.
[2] Diogenes Laertius, v. 2, 14.
[3] Diog. Laertius, iv. 3, 5.

and home character about these sects, which contrasts with the sterner practice of the Stoics.

Thus we see that philosophy was endowed long before the emperor attached it to the patronage of the State. Indeed, it may be suggested that public governmental support was the last thing Epicurus could expect. When the lectures are mentioned which the Ephêbi, or young Athenian collegians, attended, one finds no notice of the schools of the Epicureans among the rest.[1] All along they seem to have had little connection with the educational machinery recognised by the State, and to have formed a sect apart from their scientific and literary rivals, and one can hardly argue from the latter to the former. Young students destined to be future citizens could learn little suitable for public life, for the bar, or for the senate, in the gardens of Epicurus.

The directions of Epicurus seem to have been in all points faithfully carried out by his executors and successors. An unbroken line of teachers sat in his seat :—Hermarchus, Polystratus, Dionysius, Basilides, and Apollodorus, surnamed "Prince of the Garden," were his five immediate followers in the headship of the school. How succession to the headship was determined we cannot say with absolute certainty, but it is highly probable that the departing chief named as his successor the man whom public opinion in the society marked out for the post. We hear of no squabbles about the succession, no attempts of

[1] Dur ont, *Ephèbie Attique*, ii. 152.

ambitious youths to anticipate their time, and claim a post reserved for mature experience. The birth-day of Epicurus continued to be kept regularly as an annual festival by his followers; and the monthly meetings on the 20th (Eikas) became so prominent a feature of the sect in the eyes of the world, that the Epicureans came to be nicknamed Eikadistæ (or Men of the Twentieth.)[1] Pictures of Epicurus were found in the rooms and bed-chambers of Epicureans, and even on their rings and their plate.[2]

The school clung faithfully to the doctrines of their master. He himself had composed short synopses to keep the main outlines of the system constant in the memory. In the latter part of the second century A.D., a Pythagorean philosopher contrasts, with the divergence of the later Academy from the teaching of Plato and with the variety of opinion amongst the Stoics, the unfaltering adherence of the Epicureans to the dogmas of their master. "Innovation," he says, "is condemned by them as a crime, or rather an impiety. The school of Epicurus resembles a true commonwealth; free from civil war, exhibiting a single mind, a single opinion."[3] In similar terms Seneca, in the first century A.D., adverts to the deference of the sect to the dicta of the master;

[1] Athenæus, VII. 298; cf. Cicero, *De Finibus*, II. 163. Some lines of Philodemus in the Greek Anthologia (XI. 44) allude to one of these simple meals.

[2] Cicero, *De Finibus*, V. 5; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXXV. 5.

[3] Numenius, quoted by Eusebius, *Præpar. Evangel.*, XIV. v. 3.

and a century before his time Cicero has the same story to tell.

The language in which the Epicureans speak of their master is quite unlike that of any other philosophical school for its founder. When the Stoic is asked to point out an historical type of his ideal wise man, he confesses the shortcomings even of Zeno, and is unwilling to affirm that either Socrates or Diogenes the Cynic will stand the test and present an incarnate paragon of goodness and wisdom.

But even in the lifetime of Epicurus we have seen the almost divine worship of which he was the object. Colôtes falls down at his feet and does him reverence—though, it is true, Epicurus gently returns the compliment and chides his extravagant admirer. Metrodôrus speaks of the truly god-revealing sacramental services (*orgia*) of Epicurus.[1] To the Roman Epicurean poet his master seems a grander and more beneficent being than any of the gods whom his countrymen held in reverence: his words are golden words, ever most worthy of an endless life.[2] And the language of the speakers on the Epicurean side in Cicero's works is of the same tenor: Epicurus is the one man who has seen the truth, freed men's minds from the greatest delusions, and taught all that is needful for a good and happy life: he is the discoverer of truth and the architect of blessedness: his rule of conduct has, as it were,

[1] Plutarch, *Adv. Colotem.*, 1117 B.
[2] Lucretius, III. 13; v. 8.

descended from heaven to give knowledge to all mankind.[1] The devotion of the school and its quasi-religious observances, in fact, formed a favourite subject of jesting for the world.

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, I. 32; I. 64; I. 14.

CHAPTER IV.

DOCUMENTARY SOURCES.

THE student of Epicureanism is placed at a great disadvantage, as compared with the student of the other schools of ancient philosophy. The historians of Platonism and Aristotelianism have a large collection of the writings both of Plato and Aristotle, on which to base their expositions. In their case the want of authentic documents only makes itself felt when an attempt is made to trace the historical career of the two systems. There is also no doubt a textual difficulty to be met. Questions must be answered about the several portions of their reputed works—as to the genuineness of particular dialogues of Plato, or treatises of Aristotle, and as to the relations of one part of the system to another. In the case of Stoicism and Epicureanism there is quite another condition of affairs. The writings of the founders of these schools and of their early disciples have almost entirely disappeared, and we are dependent on the statements of authors who lived more than two centuries after the organization of the system. But even here Stoicism is better off than Epicureanism. The works of Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius exhibit in large outlines, and amid varied surroundings, the main

dogmas of the ethical creed of the Porch, as it was understood and practised in the first and second centuries, A.D. We catch the general spirit of Stoicism in this way much more tangibly than can be done by observing a number of isolated aphorisms.

Yet, one writer Epicureanism does possess, in whom the spirit of the system has found ample expression, coloured, perhaps, by the Roman utilitarian and didactic spirit, and by the Roman sense of dignity, and stamped with the earnestness of the man. Lucretius, in his poem on the nature of things, "De Naturâ Rerum," has given a Latin representation of the Epicurean creed which must be pronounced to be, on the whole, accurate and faithful. But the poem, posthumously edited, did not receive the last touches of its author's hand. It is full of casual or unskilful junctures, and wanting in continuity; it emphasizes certain sides of the system to the neglect of others, and it is too much encumbered by the exigencies of verse to be able to follow freely the subtleties of argument. Yet, as the only exposition of Epicureanism by a zealous convert to its creed, it claims a unique value amongst the authorities on this subject.

In some respects, however, the standard and primary authority for the system, as well as for the history, which others may supplement and correct, but cannot entirely supersede, is the tenth book of the history of the lives and opinions of the ancient philosophers, by Diogenes Laertius. This book, of which Thomas Stanley's "History of Philosophy,"[1] may

[1] First edition, London, 1655.

practically, for English readers, be regarded as a paraphrase, is an extremely unsatisfactory and tantalizing performance. It is a compilation made in the third century A.D. from the contents of a large number of works on the history of the several sects of ancient philosophy—works which have not come down to us. It mixes up the most irrelevant matters; indulges largely in gossip, scandal, bon-mot, and anecdote; and is almost blameless of any attempt at artistic or critical arrangement. Contradictory statements from different authorities are placed impartially side by side, and you are left to choose from the heap your materials for a harmonious and intelligible picture. Of course, it is invaluable to have this variety of aspect; but in the want of some central point around which the variations may be grouped, and with our ignorance of the value of many of these authorities, the task of the critical historian is onerous, and at many points hopelessly insuperable. In the tenth book, which is entirely devoted to Epicurus, these faults are not so prominent as in other parts of the work. Diogenes (of Laertes, a small place on the coast of the rocky Cilicia)[1] has been supposed to be either an adherent or admirer of Epicureanism. This is, to say the least, doubtful; but in any case he has largely availed himself of sources in which Epicurean sympathies predominated.[2] After

[1] Strabo, p. 669.

[2] Diogenes is eclectic without choice, and rather chameleon-like in his sympathies. The "Sceptical" sect he carries as far as 220 A.D. or thereabouts (Diog. IX. 12).

giving at some length the stories told to the discredit of Epicurus, he begins a contradiction of them by the emphatic words : "But these men are mad : for of the excellent candour of Epicurus towards all men there are many witnesses." Besides a copy of the will of Epicurus, his account contains three epistles purporting to have been written by the philosopher to three of his disciples. The first of these, addressed to one Herodotus, contains an epitome of the main principles by which Epicureanism explained the constitution of the universe and the process of knowledge; in other words, its natural philosophy. The second epistle, that to Pythocles, deals with the principles employed in accounting for the phenomena of astronomy and meteorology. The third letter to Menœceus summarizes the moral teaching of the school, and is supplemented by quotation of the Articles (the Κύριαι δόξαι).[1] How far these letters, which as they stand exhibit a somewhat difficult and apparently corrupt text, were really written by Epicurus is a question which, considering the temptation to the forgery of letters in antiquity, has naturally been raised. Of the genuineness of the second letter, that to Pythocles, we know that doubts had been raised in the first century B.C.[2] We know also, however, from the agreement between it and the fifth and sixth books of Lucretius that it corresponded with the Epicurean doctrine in that age. And the same may be said of the two other letters, of

[1] These seem to be given completely.

[2] *Voll. Herculan.*, Coll. Alt., vol. I. p. 152.

which the genuineness has been unreasonably doubted by Buhle and others. They could subserve no purpose, as far as we can see, except to epitomize and make accessible to the faithful the fundamental views of Epicurus. If not genuine, they seem at least to be authentic. No personal or polemical motive enters into the first and third; and the polemic of the second introduces no names.

Of other sources for Epicureanism the principal are Cicero, Seneca, Plutarch, Stobæus, and Athenæus. Joannes Stobæus, a Byzantine writer of the sixth century A.D., as well as the original compiler of the treatise conventionally ascribed to Plutarch on the opinions of the philosophers, contain a few, not particularly intelligent, statements as to the Epicurean views on sundry topics of physics, and quote occasionally what professes to be Epicurean phraseology. Plutarch, besides incidental references scattered through his genuine writings, has devoted two of his essays to a keen criticism of the Epicurean views, in the course of which he refers to many points in the history of the sect, in a way to show that material on that topic was in his time abundant. The two treatises are entitled: "On the Impossibility even of a Pleasant Life, for One who adopts the Principles of Epicurus"; and "Against Colôtes" (the Epicurean). Of course, in accepting his statements, it is necessary as far as possible to discount the bias in his point of view, which tended in the direction of a religious and mystical Platonism. As for Athenæus, who wrote about a century after Plutarch, towards the close of

the second century A.D., his "Deipnosophists" is too much of a *chronique scandaleuse* and too prone to after-dinner exuberance to have more than a very subordinate value as an historical document.

Cicero and Seneca both tell us a good deal about Epicureanism, but in a fragmentary way. In his "De Finibus," his "De Naturâ Deorum," and the "Tusculan Questions," Cicero introduces the Epicurean doctrine, supported and expounded by Torquatus and Velleius in the first and second of these works respectively. Cicero seems a fair and honest reporter of what he does understand, but his method of composition, consisting in a free translation and condensation of some of the advocates of the systems he expounded, was not favourable either to depth of insight or harmony of exposition. There are places in the Tusculan Disputations where he seems to forget himself, and holds a brief for Epicureanism without perceiving the contradiction with previous statements. His information is mainly confined to the ethical portions of Epicureanism, and even there it leaves behind an impression of inexactness and want of contact with the original ideas, which he looks at too exclusively through a literary medium. Nor did Cicero ever possess any genuine interest in philosophy except as an interesting topic for discussion; and a philosophy which so completely ignored practical and political life could hardly find n him a very sympathetic interpreter. Still, as the contemporary of Lucretius, his estimates of Epicureanism in Rome are full of interest.

Seneca, the Stoical tutor of Nero, frequently quotes the sentiments of Epicureanism. In his "Moral Letters" where he poses as a spiritual director to Lucilius, he closes many of these epistles with a short maxim from Epicurus, as a moral lesson for his friend to ponder and practise. In others of his writings too he shows greater familiarity than Cicero with the physical doctrines of the school of Epicurus. Like Plutarch he seems to have been intimately acquainted with the letters of Epicurus, and Metrodôrus, and the brethren; which, apparently arranged according to chronological order, formed a large part of the Epicurean literature.[1]

Epicurus himself was a voluminous author, vying with the Stoic Chrysippus in the number of his works, and surpassing him far, when the fact was taken into account that he did not, like the latter, fill his books with quotations from other authors. Three hundred volumes or rolls is the number at which his literary labours are roughly estimated by his biographer.[2] Of his style we can simply judge by report and a few samples. It is utterly without rhetorical grace, exhibits little variety, and is somewhat deficient in logical symmetry. He has a very decided manner of his own, not moulded upon classical examples, but aiming, not always successfully, at the directest and most characteristic expression of his thoughts. The sole principle of his utterances was to be perspicuous,

[1] Seneca, Epp. 18, 21, 79, 98, 99: cf. Philodem. de Pietate (Gomperz), pp. 105, 127.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, x. 17.

—to be understood. He is often, however, involved, and does not shrink from repetitions. With iteration of phrase he returns again and again to the essential features of his system.[1] The individuality of his style extends even to the formulæ of social intercourse, which he endeavoured to restore to significance. The ancients noticed that instead of the conventional wish for "joy" to the recipient of a letter, he substituted one for "welfare" or for "good life." Others objected to the occasional exuberance of his style, and to his polysyllabic words for simple things.

Of these three hundred rolls many no doubt were trifling in extent. The list of the more important of them given by Diogenes begins with a work on Nature, in thirty-seven books, and ends with his Letters; and includes amongst others, essays on the following topics: On Atoms and Void; On Love; On the Criterion, or Canon; On the Gods; On Piety; On Lives; Symposium; On Sight; On Touch; On Fate; On Music; Views about Diseases; On Monarchy, &c. And of all these up to the middle of the last century, there was known no more than the pieces quoted by Diogenes and by the other writers mentioned above.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century various excavations were made on the site of the cities which had been overwhelmed in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. About the year 1752 when the explora-

[1] An energetic attack on his style is made by Cleomedes, *Cyclic. Theor. Meteor.*, II. i., §§ 91-92.

tions had already been for some time going on at the side of the ancient Herculaneum, our knowledge of Epicureanism received a considerable addition. A peasant proprietor of Resina on sinking a well through the lava which entombed the old city came upon what turned out to be the remains of an ancient villa of considerable extent and in good preservation.[1] Its inhabitant had evidently been a man of taste and wealth, for its open spaces contained some fine works of ancient art. In one place of the villa stood the busts of Epicurus, Hermarchus, Zeno of Sidon, and Demosthenes; three heads of the Epicureans, beside the great orator. Among the others were two busts which modern research, confronting them with the oration of Cicero against Piso, has suggested to be in all likelihood the busts of Piso and Gabinius.[2]

But the main discovery was a room containing a large number of rolls of papyrus. At first they were treated as worthless. Charred and blackened by fire, they seemed like anything but the receptacles of literary treasures. At length, when the nature of the discovery dawned upon the investigators, it was apparently hopeless to do anything with them: they had been so solidified into a single black mass by the action of the fire, that it seemed impossible to unroll them; nor did the attempts of Sir Humphrey Davy to apply the resources of chemistry mend matters. The method, first suggested and employed by a monk,

[1] See the "Philo. Trans. of the Royal Society" of that time.

[2] Comparetti in "Pompei e la Regione Sotterrata dal Vesuvio nell' anno LXXIX." Napoli, 1879.

from Northern Italy,[1] to open the papyri by attaching gold-beater's skin to the outside-edge of the manuscript, and then slowly unwinding it by means of screws, is the only method which has proved at all feasible. By this means about 341 of the 1,800 papyri found in the library of the Herculanean villa have up to the present date been unwound; and of these 195 have been published. When the news first spread through Europe that a whole library of ancient manuscripts had been disinterred, the hopes of scholars played freely on the possible issues. The lost books of Livy or Tacitus, the plays of Menander, and other desiderata of ancient literature, were among the treasures expected. But great was the disappointment which awaited the philologists. As one by one the dilapidated rolls were slowly deciphered, and their inscriptions copied, it was found that almost all of them were treatises of Epicurean philosophy. Of the works to which the name of the authors can be attached, there have been published, up to the present day, sixty-five. Of these, eleven manuscripts contain works by Epicurus; but nearly all of them belong to his work "On Nature."[2] These have been edited, but except in occasionally fortunate passages, where conjecture is easy and almost certain, they are a mere wreck of fragments. A few others

[1] Father Antonio Piaggi, a Genoese.

[2] In the *Rivista di Filologia e d'Istruzione Classica* for 1879, p. 400, Comparetti argues that a papyrus, published in Voll. Herc. C. A., vol. xi., is the work by Epicurus "On Choices and Avoidances."

belong to the known names of the Epicurean school, such as Polystratus and Colôtes. But the great bulk of these papyri, about forty-five in number, consist of essays by Philodemus, the contemporary of Cicero. Of these, again, there are thirty rolls which contain what seem to be either parts, or modified and corrected versions, of a treatise on rhetoric. Besides these there are amongst his essays, papers treating of a great number of subjects, showing that at least in his case the Epicurean was not idle, and dealt with other topics than the merely ethical. We find treatises on the virtues and the vices, on the gods, on piety, on anger, on death, on wealth, on economics, on poetry, on music, on inductive logic; besides a number of compilations dealing with the history of the sect, and a variety of notes which Philodemus took from the lectures of Zeno, the "Coryphæus of the Epicureans" in the first century B.C.

It is scarcely possible to resist the evidence thus supplied that the room containing these manuscripts was the library or study of Philodemus; that, at any rate, it was the receptacle of all his papers published or unpublished. There, a century after his time, they were overtaken by the eruption of 79 A.D., and buried for nearly seventeen centuries. Scarcely less clear is the inference, that the villa in question was the property of one who had a special attachment to Philodemus,—an author of whose prose works we do not even hear elsewhere. We know that Calpurnius Piso Cæsoninus, the father-in-law of Cæsar, afforded a

domicile to Philodemus, who rendered him literary and professional services; and thus it seems as if the villa discovered in Herculaneum had been Piso's seaside residence. But whether this be so or not, the value of the discovery for the history of ancient philosophy is not lessened. In this respect, indeed, it is easy to cherish extravagant hopes. The state in which the papyri were found was most disheartening and baffling. Scarcely ever is a line absolutely complete. Even when a few successive lines are so far perfect that a very little ingenuity can supply the defective letters or syllables, a great gap suddenly occurs and completely blocks the way to all intelligence of the contents. In such circumstances some of the earlier editors gave free play to the constructive imagination, and made the mystery into something comprehensible, but—after all—only conjectural. It will be some time, and will require great diligence combined with scholarly ingenuity, before the full fruits, at best somewhat insipid, of these new documents can be won. Already Theodor Gomperz, of Vienna, and other German scholars,[1] as well as Domenico Comparetti, of Florence, have done much in this work—especially the first named.

The papyri themselves, so far as they have not been destroyed, as too often happened in the first attempts at opening them, exist in the *officina dei Papiri* at Naples. Under the auspices of the Neapolitan Government several of them were edited,

[1] Bücheler, Bahnsch, Spengel.

with extensive commentary and dissertation, in about ten volumes folio, between the years 1795 and 1855. A new series of these "Volumina Herculanensia," as they are entitled, was begun in 1861, and is still slowly going on. This collection is a lithographic reproduction from the copies taken on unrolling the manuscripts, and is free from note or comment. In England, the Bodleian Library rejoices in the possession of excellent copies of a large number of the manuscripts, in the shape of very accurate pencil tracings on paper, taken on the spot, and presented to the University of Oxford by George IV. Out of these a selection, dictated at least to some extent by the legibility of the manuscripts, and apparently in no connection with the interest of the contents, was lithographed, and published in the year 1824.[1]

[1] Four specimens of the charred manuscripts (not yet unrolled) may be seen in the Bodleian Library.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL ASPECT OF THE SYSTEM.

THE popular conception of an Epicurean has varied at different times, but at no time has it been either very fair or very favourable. To the writers of the Roman classical period the charges against Epicureanism were drawn from its denial of the divine providence, its open proclamation of pleasure as the chief good, its opposition to a merely literary and intellectual culture, its withdrawal of its followers from political interests and occupations, and the grotesque features in some of its physical and physiological speculations. Its unscientific character, and its studied indifference, and even hostility, to the prevailing literary and logical as well as mathematical investigations of that epoch, were probably the chief charges in the count. During the ages of theological supremacy which succeeded the downfall of the Empire, Epicurean became synonymous with atheist and unbeliever; it meant a follower of the lusts of the flesh, with whom there was no fear of God to terrify, no ideal aspirations to ennoble, no belief in immortality to check or cheer. Irreligion, free-thinking, scepticism, infidelity, on the side of divine affairs: and on the human side, a selfish

devotion to one's own ease and comfort, with no care for country or kindred, were the chief ideas connoted by Epicureanism. If we come down to more modern times, the Epicurean of Hume's essays is "the man of elegance and pleasure." He refuses to be bound by the arbitrary restraints which philosophers impose in seeking to "make us happy by reason and rules of art": he alternates his hours between the "amiable pleasure" and "the gay, the frolic virtue"; "forgetful of the past, secure of the future," he enjoys the present: the sprightly muses are the companions of his cheerful discourses and friendly endearments; and, after a day spent in "all the pleasures of sense, and all the joys of harmony and friendship," the shades of night bring him "mutual joy and rapture," with the charming Celia, the mistress of his wishes.[1]

A cloud hangs, and has hung, over Epicureanism; and though we can say with confidence that much of the obloquy is undeserved, there will apparently always be a good deal in its teachings on which certainty, or even intelligence, is unattainable. The unbiassed documentary evidence for exposition which we possess is fragmentary, obscure, and does not extend to every part of the philosophic field. On the other hand, from a variety of causes, misconstruction and misrepresentation have made it their victim. It has been treated as an enemy and an interloper by the statesman, the priest, and the philosopher.

[1] Hume's Essays: "The Epicurean."

It has shared the common fate of every system which attacks either of these great powers, the State, the Church, and the republic of arts and letters, and does so without relying on the support of one member or other of the triumvirate against the others. Science and literature, politics and religion, each and all found themselves assailed by the system of Epicurus. That system came forward as a philosophical system, and yet it turned a hostile front to the customary views of education and of culture, and to the accepted methods and results of the sciences.[1] Whilst other philosophical doctrines either supported or did not interfere with the claims and projects of the political world, Epicureanism openly preached a cosmopolitan and humanitarian creed, which taught the citizen to stand aloof from patriotic and national obligations, and to live his own life as a human being amongst others, in the realm of nature and not of statecraft.[2] As to religion, the case was much the same as it was with the State. The gods, like the government of the State, disappeared at the fiat of Epicureanism from their commanding position above nature, to become part and parcel of the great natural process in which they, like all other things, live and move and have their being.[3] Above the intellectual structures of science and art, above the gods of

[1] Cicero, *De Fin.*, I. 7, 26; Plutarch, 1094 E.; Athenæus, XIII. 588.

[2] Seneca, *Epist.*, 90, 35; Plutarch, 1125 C.-1127; Epictetus, *Dissertat.*, II. 20, 20; III. 7, 19.

[3] Seneca, *De Benefic.*, IV. 19.

religious faith, above the laws of political convention, rose man, the real individual man, seeking in voluntary association with his fellow-men to live his own life to the fullest of his capacity and with fullest satisfaction.

Of Epicureanism, as of all philosophy, it may be said, that it aims at emancipation, liberation, freedom. But scarcely anywhere was the emancipation carried to the same length as in Epicureanism. Generally speaking, emancipation has meant and means the substitution of an ideal for a material or sensuous sovereignty. We are freed from the dominion of the passions and the flesh by being handed over as subjects to the spirit and the reason. We are taken out of the bondage of this world by taking upon ourselves the yoke of the other world. The heavenly frees from the earthly, and the intellectual from the sensual. Epicureanism professes to impose no yoke or obligation. It agrees with other philosophies in distinguishing between the intellect and the senses (or what it calls the flesh), and, even in a way, in subordinating the latter to the former. But the man of Epicureanism is no abstraction—a reason struggling in the bonds of an alien flesh, which in Pythagorean, and occasionally in Platonic language, forms its prison. Man was not held to be a merely "rational animal," as he was defined by the Stoics. The reason or understanding in Epicureanism is neither the prisoner *de facto*, nor the lord *de jure* of the body or flesh. The flesh, in the view of Epicurus, is our unenlightened, the understanding our enlightened self.

The reason is the light which shows us the complete nature which we unwittingly are, and in which we blindly and ignorantly live ; which tells us those laws and limits of our existence of which the fleshly nature is unaware, and ignorance whereof breeds vain and inevitably baffled hopes. Naturally, or in our flesh, we are like children stranded in the darkness of night, with no idea of our true position in the world, and inclined to fancy terrors in the gloom which surrounds us.[1] Hence arises the need of philosophy; which, said Epicurus, is an activity that by doctrine and reasoning prepares the way for the happy life. [2]

The main problems of philosophy are, therefore, two in number ; or, Epicureanism falls into two parts. The first is a theory of man and of the universe, explaining his position therein, his constitution, and natural powers. This is the physiology (*φυσιολογία*), or philosophy of nature. The other is the practical application of the knowledge so acquired to the regulation of conduct. This is the practical or ethical part of the system. It is at the same time evident that the two parts cannot be completely separated. The theoretical examination has its course limited by the practical need : it is knowledge, not for the sake of knowledge, but for the sake of action, and the rule of conduct. Scientific investigation is permitted only so far as it lays down the true place and position of man in the world of things.

And this exclusion of extraneous considerations

[1] Lucretius, II. 55. [2] Sext. Emp. *adv. Ethic*, 169.

may be presented under another aspect. If there are any sciences which deal with words and ideas rather than things—and the sciences of rhetoric, grammar, and mathematics come in different ways under this description—then application to their study can only be held to be waste of time. They divert attention from the one thing needful. The human soul cannot find nourishment in mere words: it craves for realities. Epicurus, following up certain ideas which Socrates had emphasized, asks of every science, Does it deal with facts? and is it useful to me as a human being? If it does not, it may possibly be the pastime of an idle hour; but it should never claim the devotion of a life, because it makes a man miss his true good. It should never be forgotten, therefore, that the natural philosophy of Epicurus is the foundation of his ethics; its *raison d'être* is, that it renders possible a theory of conduct.

Besides these two parts of the system, however, there is another, which may be styled introductory. It deals with the general principles on which we are entitled to assert anything. This is the Canonic, the doctrine of the canons, or grounds of evidence. But the Canonic can scarcely be said to form an independent part of Epicureanism: it goes little beyond a few general and preliminary remarks on the question, "What right have we to believe or affirm?" It is, in short, a protest against the scepticism which declares that every statement is uncertain, and science only a probability; and which maintains that,

in these circumstances, the only thing left for man is to keep himself free and unshackled from all one-sided adherence. The Canonic is thus the beginning of a logic, dealing, not with the grounds for inferring one proposition from another, but with the more fundamental question: On what ultimate grounds is a statement of fact based?

The three parts of Epicureanism are, then, Logic, Physics, and Ethics, if we apply to Epicureanism the distinction which had been applied by the Stoics to the doctrines of their own school. But, at the same time, the terms are infinitely misleading when so applied. Of logic, in the sense in which the term was understood by Aristotle and the Stoics, there was none in Epicureanism. Nor was this all. The Epicureans regarded it as folly, as unnecessary trifling with useless questions. Still less, again, is there a distinction between the Epicurean physics and ethics as independent or parallel branches of inquiry.

The case stands thus: The Epicurean school professes, in the first instance, to be founded on the senses and the feeling, to be based on reality, as popularly understood. It appeals to our immediate perception and feeling, and declares that these must never be recklessly set aside. What we immediately feel and perceive, that is true; what we directly find ourselves to be, that is what we ought to do. Act what thou art is its motto, and sense and feeling tell thee with sufficient distinctness what thou art. But the promise thus held out is certainly not kept to the letter. What we supposed to be our feelings and

sensations turn out to be less trustworthy than we had been, up to this point, led to suppose. The greater number of our beliefs and opinions are due to hasty and erroneous inferences. What seemed to be perception was really reasoning. We must, therefore, get back to our original perceptions. We were told originally that we must believe nothing for which we have not the evidence of the senses and the feeling. It becomes apparent that that evidence does not go so far as we had supposed. Our senses and our feelings seem to mislead, and yet, if we reject all sense and feeling, knowledge is made impracticable.

In other words, the world is not as it seems: all our perceptions cannot, without examination or qualification, be relied upon. This, however, is only because in our perceptions there constantly intrudes an element which is not sense. The other element, which is truly sense, is infallible.[1] All our sensations are witnesses to reality, only liable to be misinterpreted. Above all, there is a great deal which is inaccessible to direct observation altogether. But though it is unknown, the human mind cannot let it alone. Hence arises the need of a canon of inference, which is given as follows :—Everything that is supposed to happen in the sphere beyond knowledge must follow the same laws of operation as what is known to occur within the range of our experience.

[1] Cicero, *De Finibus*, I. 7, 22; *Acad.*, II. 29; Diogenes, X. 31.

Whether it happen in what is beneath the range of the senses (*i.e.*, in the microscopic world, and what lies beyond the power of the microscope), or beyond the range of the senses (*i.e.*, in the telescopic world, and what lies beyond the reach of the telescope), it is governed by the same laws as regulate the occurrences visible to unaided sense.

The canonic thus justifies those inferences which go beyond sense. It is right and just to affirm about the unknown, either what is confirmed and witnessed by the known, or what at least is not witnessed against by the known.[1] But, at the same time, it is well to note in which sense the reason is here said to go beyond the sense. It goes beyond simply quantitatively: it carries us further and deeper, but there is a general likeness between the one case and the other. The atoms, *e.g.*, which are intellectually perceived, have precisely the same qualities as the bodies which are sensibly perceived, when we deduct from the latter all which can be shown to be the effect of a combination of circumstances. The intellect is only a subtler and more far-seeing sense, and the sense is a short-sighted and grosser intellect. In Epicurean phraseology, in fact, the particles which constitute the one are said to be finer and more ethereal than those which constitute the other; and for that reason, and that reason only, they are susceptible to minute influences, to which the grosser

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 24, 51; Ibid., 25, 88.

particles composing the senses are stolidly insensible.[1]

The Epicurean logic, then, if logic it can be called, is in the direction of inductive logic. It lays down the senses as the first, and, we may say, the ultimate court of appeal as a criterion of reality. They never can be mistaken, though the mind may be wrong in the inferences it draws from them. This is the first principle; and the second is, that the unknown is regulated by the same laws as the known: that is to say, the operations in the world invisible to the senses follow on a larger or less scale the same principles as govern the operations of the visible world. We do not, in the intelligible world, find ourselves lifted into a world where new categories and higher conceptions prevail. Thirdly, language in the Epicurean logic is subjected to scrutiny. Every word, if it is to pass muster in argument, must be *en rapport* with a clear and distinct conception, which again must finally be based upon one clear and distinct perception.[2] These are the three main principles of Canonic: that sensation is the only guarantee of reality, that language must be able to recall distinct images, and that reasoning must employ known and familiar processes to make unknown and mysterious facts explicable.

[1] Lucretius, III. 180.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, X. 24, 38; Lucretius, IV. 478.

CHAPTER VI.

THE NATURAL WORLD.

THESE logical principles prepare the way for the physiology or natural philosophy of Epicurus. Beginning with the senses, we ask what the senses reveal? The answer is, that the only phenomenon which they reveal is matter in motion. This double conception is the groundwork of all Epicurean philosophy, the main effort of which is to reduce everything to modes of matter and motion. Matter is the sole reality: movement is the generic form to which all its phenomena may ultimately be reduced. The incorporeal is the same as the non-existent. Epicurus departs from Aristotle, to follow the doctrines taught by Anaxagoras and Democritus. "Generation and destruction," said Anaxagoras,[1] "are mistaken ideas amongst the Greeks. For generation, the right term would be composition; and for destruction, separation."

Matter is that which can be touched. Touch, says Lucretius, is the sense of body.[2] The tangible, both in the active and the passive application of that term, is the corporeal. All the senses are but modi-

[1] Simplic. *Comment. in Aristot. Physic.*, fol. 346.

[2] Lucretius, II. 435.

fications of touch : only what we can touch and what can touch us has reality. Touch, again, is impact upon the organ of sense, and is thus only a special case of the more general phenomenon of impact. Impact is body moving and causing motion. And thus we are brought round to a conception of things in which we find body acting upon body, so as, generally speaking, to cause motion; in some special cases, however, giving rise to another phenomenon, to be called sensation or intelligence. The latter phenomenon may, however, for the present be left out of account. Epicurus, so far as we know, as little succeeded in explaining the connection, if any, between this exceptional, and, so to speak, collateral result of impact, and the general phenomena of movement, as any of his predecessors or successors have done.

According to Epicurus, the only facts of which philosophy can take account are material, tangible things. Mind, if real, is tangible somehow, is a kind of matter. Immaterial mind would be a nonentity. Obviously, however, everything depends on what we mean by matter. The popular conception of matter takes things too concretely, and with too little analysis. It follows the deliverances of the uninstructed senses, which present things as qualitatively distinct from each other. We must go to the reason to reconcile and explain the imperfect information thus given by the senses. We must see behind the differences of colour, taste, smell, of vegetable and animal organization, of life and death, into the

ultimate something, of which these are only manifestations, due to transient and accidental conditions. What, then, is the verdict of the reason, as contrasted with the senses?

Every body is composed of a greater or smaller number of atoms, or indivisible particles, in various degrees of proximity to each other. What appears to be solid is never absolutely so. The air, the water, the fruit, the rock, have all an atomic or molecular constitution. The tiny particles of which they are composed float in an ocean of empty space, where they are forced into closer or laxer proximity to each other. How small these atoms are we cannot tell. They are cognisable by reason and thought, but they are beneath the power of sense, at least of unassisted sense. Whether further aids to perception might reveal them is a question apparently not suggested to Epicurus. But of such elementary particles every existing structure has been built up: into such it will sooner or later return. Nor is the process limited to the world we see around us. We have no reason to suppose there is a limit set to existence at the furthest point whither our vision can carry us. Away and away beyond the horizon of the senses, the same process of the construction of worlds out of molecular aggregations is endlessly repeated. It would be as absurd to suppose only one world in the infinite as to conceive a great cornfield with only a single stalk of grain in it.[1]

[1] Metrodôrus, as quoted by Plutarch, *De Placit Philosoph.*, I. 5.

A question, however, arises about the movement of the atoms. The only case of apparently uncaused movement is the fall of unsupported bodies to the earth. That fall takes place in a straight line. Neither the circular movement, which Aristotle holds to be the natural and perfect movement of the celestial bodies, nor the upward movement which, in his opinion, characterizes fire, correspond in the judgment of Epicurus with the observed facts of terrestrial change. Upward movement is a mistake. As for circular movement, it is explained by subsequent science as a conjunction of two rectilineal movements acting at right angles to each other. We cannot, therefore, assume an initial tendency of atoms to attract or repel each other, or to revolve round each other. But, in apparent conformity with experience, we may assume that the atoms fall downwards. Of course, an up and a down in a vacant world can only be arbitrarily fixed,[1] and a modern would object that every fall presupposed attraction. But Epicurus is content with the phenomenon of fall as experienced in daily life: he asks for no cause of the movement so denominated, but regards it as natural and primary. Thus, in the primeval void, all atoms are perpetually falling. To assume more would be to affix active properties to the atoms; but such properties the atoms, however erratic, as we

[1] An obscure passage in Diogenes Laertius, x. 60, seems to attempt a justification of the distinction. Cf. Lange's History of Materialism, vol. I., note 21 on chap. I.

shall see, have none. But if these bodies perpetually fall in parallel lines, never overtaking each other, because of equal velocity,[1] they will practically just remain where they were in equilibrium. All we gain is a picture of atoms flitting after each other across the field of imagination; but, for any result so arising, except weariness of the continuous fall into the abyss, the atoms might as well remain at rest. To a theory which places its ultimates in atoms which have no further qualities than shape and size (so as to make them picturable), it is evident that attraction and repulsion are obscure and occult ideas. To accept their aid towards an explanation of movement would be to surrender the citadels of the system. It seems, therefore, as if the molecular equilibrium would remain eternal, in the absence of a sufficient cause to bring the atoms in contact.

The senses and the feelings, however, suggest a way out of the difficulty. In our own experience as conscious beings we seem familiar with the fact that not unfrequently we suddenly change the direction of our action; we swerve from the line in which obvious motives were urging us; we form a new resolution and break up an old habit. We seem to recognise in ourselves a principle of spontaneous and sudden change, an incalculable spring of deviation, a power of resisting and contradicting the tendency impressed upon us by circumstances and fortune. In this power which we feel ourselves to have—the

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 61; Lucretius, II. 240.

power of free-will or spontaneity — of originating movement apart from and in divergence from the movement given from without—we find a suggestion towards removing the difficulty. In the atom, then, Epicurus assumes the existence of a similar incalculable and unpredictable element which, some time (we know not when) and some where (we know not where), either once or oftener (our authorities do not answer the question), impels the atom from its previous direction. The amount of the divergence from the perpendicular is, like all qualities connected with the magnitude of the atoms, an infinitesimally small one. And the reason for minimising the deflection is obvious. If we allow it to become so great as to be observable, the phenomenon of motion in an oblique direction thus created would openly contradict the well-known experience that all uncaused motion is naturally perpendicular.

By means of this *clinamen* or παρέγκλισις of the molecules,[1] Epicurus at once tries to retain the spontaneity of individual action or the superiority of man to circumstances, and at the same time, in his explanation of the primeval conditions of contact between the atoms, shrinks from running too openly counter to the recognised experience of material movement. Let us assume, then, that his purpose has been attained. The molecules, small and great,

[1] Lucretius, II. 216–293 ; Cicero, *De Finibus*, I. 19 ; *De Nat. Deor.*, I. 25, 69. Stobæus (Eclog. I. 346) attributes to Epicurus a distinction between motion in a straight line and slanting motion.

of one shape or another, meet with each other; and their impact is followed by various consequences. Sometimes they are mutually repelled, and fly off to other spaces; sometimes they are locked in by circumambient atoms and forced to juxtaposition; sometimes their peculiar shape, weight, and size, make them to cohere closely together and form combinations of considerable permanence and stability. In this way the spaces of infinity are parcelled out into innumerable folds containing large aggregations of matter in various shapes and structures. In such an enormous aggregation, which may be called a world, there are several tolerably united bodies, composed each of a number of molecules in aggregation, but not in any case in absolutely close contact. Everywhere between the molecules there is empty space—absolute vacuum. The densest, heaviest, hardest body has less vacuum within it than a rare, light, or soft piece of matter; but vacuum is never completely wanting. Nothing therefore is ever a complete unity; it only seems to be continuous and whole: really, if we could look deep enough into it, we should see that it is only a collection of parts held together by the fortuitous influences of circumstance.

Such combinations or aggregations however exhibit a number of phenomena which were not found in the elements from which they sprung. Great, indeed, is the virtue of aggregation. The original atoms were extended bodies, too small singly to be perceived by sense, and differing from each other in no points besides figure, size, and weight. But, as every one is

aware, a difference of size or weight or shape may often lead to differences which seem quite other than quantitative. So is it here. In the first place, as we have already noticed, it leads to the explanation of the distinction between mind and body. Epicurus is, as will be seen, a materialist, and so far as he goes is in earnest with his materialism. That is to say, he does not merely ignore the mind: he expounds it, *i.e.* the basis of psychical phenomena, to be a finer species of matter composed of rounder and minuter particles. It is true that he introduces a further subtlety by distinguishing between the soul, or principle of life and feeling which pervades the whole body, and the rational mind which inhabits the region of the heart. Sufficient is it to remember for the present that the soul is a subtler and more refined materiality which is thus endowed with more delicate and refined perceptions than the bodily organs.

In the second place, life and sensibility are the characteristics of certain forms of aggregate matter. Epicurus does not, like a modern, fictitiously get over the difficulty by introducing the term organized, but honestly enough maintains the general uniformity in the process of aggregation in all parts of nature as a thing differing in degree, not in kind. He simply asserts—what, no doubt, is the fact—that certain (or uncertain) combinations of the primeval molecules present the phenomena of life and consciousness which are entirely absent from the original molecules themselves. How such a remarkable result can be

produced is a question which apparently never occurred to him; and he therefore did not feel any need of recurring to hypotheses like those by which modern speculators have endeavoured to exhibit mind or consciousness as the development of latent possibilities in the unconscious matter.[1] It may also be hinted that Epicurus, unintentionally perhaps, did service to the psychologist by maintaining that the processes in the human organism which are the physical concomitants or antecedents of thought and sensation are distinctly mechanical processes of matter in motion. Ignorant, however, of the structure of the brain and the laws of nervous action, he could give only a rough-and-ready hypothetical explanation of the mode of transmission of sense-impressions and volitions through the organism.

Perhaps, too, we may notice what seems in his doctrine of the mind at once to betray a departure from his original principles and a sense of the inadequacy of his explanation. According to the statements given both by Diogenes Laertius and Lucretius, the soul is a complex of elements from air, fire, and wind, and a fourth unnamed element.[2] The last, which is the differentiating constituent of the mind, suggests that it is postulated by the feeling

[1] Such as Hartmann's hypothesis of "The Unconscious," and the "Plastic Nature" of Cudworth, but more especially ideas on the nature and powers of so-called matter like those of Professor Tyndall.

[2] Stobæus, *Ecl.*, I. 226; Diogenes Laertius, x. 63–64; Lucretius, III. 241–245.

that there is more in the psychical than physical analogies altogether explain. And further, the introduction of air, fire, and wind, suggests that Epicurus supplements the stricter atomic theory of Democritus by additions derived from the early physicists who identify the soul with air, or fire, or wind; and from Aristotle, in whose system the combination of the four principles of cold, hot, wet, and dry, played a main part, as explaining the processes of nature.

But, passing on to a further point in the results of combination, we have now to consider the way in which Epicurus explained the fact that the visible world is supposed to possess colour, sound, taste, smell, softness, &c. To do this is partly the aim of the Epicurean theory of sense-perception. In every body of matter, every object of perception, there is, besides the primary particles of which it is composed, a further complement of secondary particles of finer quality, partly maintaining a position over the whole of its superficies, partly existing in the interior interstices between its constituent atoms. These minor molecules, which vary from body to body, are in a continual flux; they are always floating away from the body to which they belong, and wandering aimlessly hither and thither about the world. For a considerable length of time these filmy membranes, which bodies are continually throwing off, preserve the shape and arrangement they possessed on the original body; though, of course, in time, if they meet with obstructions, as they are sure to do, they will be broken up, and lose all resemblance to their

present frame-work. Those films which are sloughed off the surface of bodies find in the visual organs an appropriate medium; they penetrate the eye, and, preserving the position they had in the object, cause the mind to see the latter, even though distant. By their direct contact they reveal the distant objects which they resemble. Similarly, the throngs of filmy particles from the interior of bodies when they happen to meet a nose, reveal the smell of the body; when they meet an ear, produce the perception of sound; and when they touch the tongue, lead to the perception of the body's taste. Thus colours, sounds, tastes, are not qualities of primary body; they are only found where minutest particles from the real bodies come into contact with the organs of sense[1] in an animal structure.

How absurd this theory is we need hardly trouble ourselves to explain. It gets rid of mathematical optics by a return to rude, primitive fancies of the barbarian age. It refuses to be satisfied with any such makeshifts as are afforded by the mathematical assumption of immaterial rays of light, and the still more awkward assumption of material pencils of rays. It certainly recognises the doctrine already laid down by Democritus, and in modern times re-asserted by

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 46-53; Lucretius, iv. 42-109. The second book of Epicurus De Natura, of which fragments have been recovered in the Herculanean MSS., treats of this topic. It is often alluded to: *e.g.*, Apuleius, *Apolog.*, 15; Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, x. 2, 15; Macrobius, *Saturn.*, vii. 14, 3.

Galileo and Locke, of the profound distinction between the primary qualities of body (figure, size, &c.) and the secondary, such as colour, sound, taste, &c. The latter, as it points out, only belong to matter in so far as it comes into contact with organisms peculiarly sentient. But all this doctrine of sense-perception is in a way only part of a larger doctrine which has important and direct bearings on the moral theory.

In the first place, not merely do the skins shed by the objects around us meet the eye now; but, even long after the objects to which they may have belonged have ceased to exist, these phantom husks float about the world. Thus it happens that the forms of the departed may visit us long after their decease. They may occur to us even in daylight, when our attention is not engrossed by terrestrial business, and when, in the dead of night, our eyes are closed to the objects around us. Such is the Epicurean explanation of ghosts: they are disembodied films or loose skins, like those the insect leaves upon the bushes after its transition to other forms.

And, secondly, there are probably such gatherings (*συστάσεις*) sometimes formed in the void which do not owe their origin to any real bodies at all, are not thrown off from any surface, but are fortuitous and casual gatherings accumulated without cause or reason, and assuming the shapes of familiar objects. Such fantastic forms, or mirages, deceive the unwary traveller. Thus what optical science explains by complicated processes of reflection and

refraction, and by premature interpretations of the observer, Epicureanism explains by an hypothesis quite in agreement with its own doctrines and partly compatible with observed facts, but unnecessarily multiplying the causes and entities supposed to underlie phenomena.[1]

Thirdly, and here is a main point of the same theory, there are perceptions in our mind—so, at least, Epicurus affirms—of beings brighter and better than man. These images visit us when the mind is no longer besieged by the objects of sense. In the night season, and in quiet reflection, we have visions of the gods, as beings beyond the reach of trouble or of death—beings endowed with immortality and supreme felicity. Whence can such images come? There is no place for them in the world, where is incessant mutation—one thing encroaching upon another, and each impelling the other. They can only come from some place beyond the world, and, as there are innumerable worlds, from the spaces intervening between the worlds—the *intermundia* (μετακόσμια). In these intervals between world and world exist the real gods—not such as popular fancy paints them—but eternally blessed, beyond the pressure and vicissitudes of the manifold worlds. They are products of the same elements as man and animals, only fabricated of finer stuff, less liable to destruction from opposing elements; superior in every way to humanity, but not the lords of man or

[1] Lucretius, IV. 129-142, and 749-776.

of creation; only co-ordinate results of the same eternal laws which have produced the rest of things.

This doctrine, which, as it were, explained away the popular religion and theology, is one of the most striking, but also one of the darkest in the Epicurean system. It admits, and even asseverates, the existence of the gods, but it minimises the importance of the admission by refusing to the beings thus acknowledged to exist all influence or government over human affairs. The fear of God is thus removed, obviously at the price of losing the love of God also. Man has no longer a tyrant in the heavens; but he has no longer a friend there. As for the latter part of the sentence, indeed, the idea was scarcely likely to occur to a Greek of the age of Epicurus, who considered the popular mythology only; and it is evident that Lucretius never entertained the thought of such a possibility. The tenants of the heathen heaven were beings to be propitiated, entreated, dreaded, and not to be loved. Nor did such an idea of God as that taught by Plato and other lofty minds, according to which He is the cause of good, and good only, the ideal of justice and goodness and truth, ever largely find entrance into the popular creed. Even Plato himself departs from his conception, and presents Deity as an avenger and an executioner of judgment. The doctrine of Epicurus offered an explanation of the wide-spread belief in

[1] Lucretius, v. 1161-1193.

the existence of divine beings, but so emptied that belief of practical significance that in popular estimation the Epicureans were naturally, though not very fairly, treated as atheists.[1]

Connected with this was the question of existence after death, and of future punishment. Whatever may have been the case in earlier ages of Greece, there is no doubt that in the age of Epicurus the doctrine of a judgment to come, and of a hell where sinners were punished for their crimes, made a large part of the vulgar creed. The sixth book of Virgil's Æneid, with its faint outlines of an inferno, is still a great advance in gloom upon the rather neutral tints of the eleventh book of the Odyssey. Orphic and other religious sects had enhanced the terrors of the world below; whilst they had done very little towards the provision of a heaven, except for those who conformed to their own special rites. This gloomy prospect beyond the grave aggravated and embittered the natural fears of death. Against such fears the Epicurean doctrine of the relation of soul to body claimed to supply a safeguard. It laid down as its cardinal dogma the interdependence of soul and body, neither of which continues to exist after the connexion has been severed at death. When the soul leaves the body, it is dispersed into unconscious elements: when the body is left without soul, it ere long moulders away into other forms of existence.

[1] As in several passages in Lucian. For the expression of the heavy yoke imposed by religion, see Lucretius, v. 1; Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, i. 54.

The dissolved elements of the living being are insensible to pain or pleasure.[1] The Epicureans apparently believed that death was divested of its terrors, when that "dread of something after death," which "puzzles the will," was declared to be groundless.

The removal in this way of the fears of the gods and of the fears of death is the preliminary condition and preparation for the practical lessons of Epicurus. These are the two main results to which the natural philosophy has led up. As such they form the two first aphorisms of the Articles: "I. The blessed and incorruptible has no toil or trouble of its own, and causes none to others. It is not subject either to anger or favour. II. Death is nothing to us. That into which dissolution brings us has no feeling or consciousness, and what has no consciousness is nothing to us."[2] These declarations set human life free, as it were, from all controlling powers in the heavens, or in the dim hereafter. By two tremendous strokes, Epicurus cut the Gordian knot of destiny, emancipated man from divine control, and bade him freely concentrate himself on the present life without any thought of consequences beyond the tomb.

So eager was Epicurus to exclude all possibility of divine interference in the world that he gave with great detail a series of suggestions for the hypothetical explanation on non-theological principles of the celestial and meteorological phenomena. It is in these

[1] Lucretius, III. *passim*; Diogenes, X. 81.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, X. 139.

occurrences, belonging, as Epicurus thought, to a sphere where science is impossible, that the mythological explanation by direct divine causation is most at home. The phenomena of eclipses, for example, have seemed to many barbarous peoples a calamity overtaking their deities, or an expression of divine anger; and even in less rude ages the popular mind is reluctant to believe that the meteorological changes are no more and no less directly in the hands of Providence than the presence or absence of a gold-mine in a particular district. The letter of Pythocles (in Diogenes Laertius) and the fifth and sixth books of Lucretius's poem exhibit with much curious fulness this aspect of Epicureanism. At first sight, it is one of the strangest features of a strange system. We begin with the amazing doctrine that, rather than let slip a palpable fact, a false explanation is preferable to any view which leaves deity free to interpose its agency. But a second principle seems still more counter to the spirit and methods of science. A warning is loudly uttered against any doctrine which states one single and uniform explanation of the celestial and meteorological phenomena; and there is presented, on the contrary, an embarrassing choice of alternative hypotheses.

A few examples may be given of the way in which Epicurus seeks to keep out the hypothesis of deity as a physical cause. To begin with, we are told that the sun is about the same size as it appears,[1] which

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 91; Lucretius, v. 564-591. Cleomedes, in his *Cyclic. Theor.*, II. i. 87, is very severe on this peculiar doctrine.

at once disposes of the astronomical theories of Eudoxus and the Pythagorean school. Next we find the earth made the centre of our world, and the sun, moon, and stars, reduced to insignificant attendants upon it. In these statements the apparent fact is taken as the final truth. We now come to the assumptions rendered necessary in consequence of such premises. "The rising and setting of the sun and moon and stars may be due to the lighting and the extinction of these bodies; they may also be due to other causes. Their movements may not impossibly be due to the revolution of the whole heaven, or to their own revolution whilst the heaven remains at rest. The waning and waxing of the moon may be due to the turning of that body; they may also be due to certain formations of air, to the intervention of another object, and in all the ways in which the terrestrial phenomena in our midst suggest an explanation of these changes of form—unless one is so devoted to the single method of explanation (*μοναχὸς τρόπος*) that he rejects all others, having failed to perceive that some things are accessible to human science and others not, and in that way tries to solve insoluble problems."[1] All the explanations given by all the physical philosophers of antiquity meet in Epicurus as possible theories so far as they are in harmony with familiar phenomena.

Epicurus, however, has another opponent in view throughout this letter—an opponent whom he dreads

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 92-94.

even more than the mythologists. That opponent is Fate (εἱμαρμένη). The doctrine of divine interference may be bad; the doctrine of fatalism is worse. Epicurus will have neither. He rises up against the dogma of a universal law welding all the parts of the world into a gigantic machine in which human beings are involved. Unlike Aristotle,[1] who quotes with approval the Homeric line which holds that "many masters is not a good thing: let there be one ruler," he would rather see the several provinces of nature democratically independent of any central despotism. To him the recurrent phenomena of the universe are not results of a united plan: they are to him, after all, only contingencies. The sun rises and sets regularly only because the combination of elements evolves that particular chance again and again with an approximation to uniformity. There is no controlling design which all the movements of the universe co-operate in their several parts to execute and realise. Each event, therefore, has, as it were, to stand by itself and be explained on its own merits. But a science of the events of the meteorological and astronomic sphere has been declared impossible for man: all that he need hope for or care for is to get a plausible explanation conforming to the well-known canon, that it must either be confirmed by familiar experience, or, at least, not be contravened by such experience. So he shall not tremble as if the thunder were the voice of angry gods, or the

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphys.*, XII. 10 (1076, a. 4).

thunderbolt a minister of divine vengeance upon the wicked.

Throughout the whole of his explanation of the origin of the earth and of the arts and civilization of the inhabitants, Epicurus is careful to exclude any reference to divine action. There was no design, no plan determining beforehand the process of evolution, and adapting one part of the cosmic structure to co-operate with another. The sun was not formed that he might serve the uses of man, vivifying and fertilizing the earth by his rays. In all its phases teleology is extruded. The very animals which are found upon the earth have been made what they are by slow processes of selection and adaptation through the experience of life. "Many races of animals," says Lucretius, "must have perished and failed to propagate their kind. Those which we see at present alive owe their continued existence to their superior cunning or their bravery or their speed; whilst others have been preserved because they were found useful to men."[1] According to the same theory, which is ultra-Darwinian in its character, there must often, in the early ages of the world, when complex forms first casually arose, have been seen strange mixtures of unaccordant limbs and diverse natures, which, however, were unable to maintain themselves and so passed away.

Of course, in this there is no implication of the peculiarly Darwinian doctrine of descent, or develop-

[1] Lucretius, v. 855-861.

ment of kind from kind, with structure modified and complicated to meet changing circumstances. Natural selection of those species which were favoured by their qualities or by circumstances in the competition for life is no doubt affirmed by Epicurus, as it had been by Empedocles and others before him. But the point on which he chiefly insists is the naturalness of the organic world. Plants and animals have the same source as rocks and sands. It is from the seeds or elements contained in the earth that the animals have in some strange maternal throes (as Lucretius somewhat figuratively puts it) been evolved in their season: they have not fallen from heaven.[1] The same naturalistic explanation is given of the special endowments of human beings. The organs of sense were not given us ready-made in order that we might use them: that which is born in our body, on the contrary, generates for itself a use.[2] The structure, for example, which we call the eye was not given us as an organ of vision: it arose, we need not too curiously inquire how, and it was found to be useful for the perception of objects in the light. Whether this use by degrees created an organ more and more appropriate for its purpose—function, as it were, perfecting the organ—is a point apparently not discussed by Epicurus.

Similar considerations explain how man came to have language. Words originally were not conventional symbols: the first words were natural utterances

[1] Lucretius, v. 793. [2] Ibid., iv. 834.

of man corresponding to the cries peculiar to every species of animal, and signified the objects and scenes around him as they happened to gratify or excite his wants and feelings. These utterances naturally varied in proportion to the variety of national characters and of individual human beings, and to the peculiar images excited. In this way, in different regions, a special form arose in which the air was expelled from the lips and the sound formed. Different nations made different languages. Within the same nation special utterances came to be recognized by the whole community as expressive of one fixed object or occurrence, and so was avoided the ambiguity which would have supervened if no agreement were made. What was thus begun in reference to visible objects was extended subsequently so as to denote objects not accessible to sense: sounds were appropriated to invisible objects: and the mass of the people adopted the terms thus introduced, either from compulsion or by conviction of the reasonableness of the proposal.[1]

All the advances of cultivation were due to the intelligent improvement of what was offered or suggested to man by natural occasions. Man raised himself from a state of primitive rudeness and barbarism, and gradually widened the gulf which separated him from other animals. From the stage when men and women lived on the wild fruits of the wood

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 75-76; Lucretius, v. 1028-1090; Vitruvius, II. 1.

and heath, and drank the running stream—when they ran about naked and homeless, knowing not the use of fire, and living in constant fear of the claws and fangs of savage beasts—to the stage when they formed civic communities and obeyed laws, and submitted to the ameliorating influences of wedlock and friendship —all has been the work of man utilizing his natural endowments and natural circumstances. For none of the blessings of cultivation have men to thank the gods. Their worship rather has been the cause of endless woes, and has checked or prevented the course of progress. In fact, the use of money and the fear of celestial powers have been the two main baleful influences in civilization.[1]

Above all, the world is too full of flaws, too imperfect, too inharmonious and ill-adjusted, to be deemed a divine creation—*Tanta stat prædita culpa*.[2] Not that Epicurus is a pessimist, or that he believes the net result of existence to be a preponderance of evil. If we can apply either term safely to him, we should rather say that Epicurus was optimist, or his whole doctrine of the aim and end of life must be treated as illusory and misleading. He holds that, whatever the chances of life are, and in whatever direction they may preponderate, it is always in the power of reasonable men, if they will, to make all things work together for happiness. But to this end it is essential that man should not have his hands tied

[1] Lucretius, v. 925-1457. The Epicureans seem to have made the first attempt to write the natural history of civilization.

[2] Ibid., v. 199.

by fate or divine arbitrary will, but be free to do the best he can for himself. Τὸ παρ' ἡμᾶς αὐτέσποτον:[1] we are our own masters, so far, at least, that no over-mastering destiny drags us along in its train whether we will or not. The gods have left man alone. Is it possible even, asks Lucretius, that any being, however wise and powerful, can have his eyes on all the corners of the earth at once? At any rate, it is not the case that the immortals interfere. Man has his hands free to scale the heavens and make himself blessed as the gods.

Has man, then, according to Epicurus, a free will? It is, perhaps, hazardous, in the scanty supply of evidence, to attempt a categorical answer to the question. Except a brief reference in Lucretius and Diogenes, and a somewhat ambiguous passage in the recently recovered fragments of Epicurus himself, there is nothing specially fixing the problem one way or another.[2] It is true that we may argue from other principles of his system. Too much reliance, however, may be placed on such consistency. It is perfectly conceivable that a philosopher while binding Nature fast in fate may leave the human will free; and so, although Epicureanism, in its theory of perception, *seems* to reduce the mind to a mere re-agent for the various *idola*, or *spectra*, which flood in upon it from outward sources, it need not follow that he denied all

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 133.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, x. 133; Lucretius, iv. 777-817. Gomperz has edited and commented upon some fragments on this question (from papyrus 1056, in Coll. Prior, x. 697).

spontaneity to the mind. Rather, this last question he does not appear to have touched. When Lucretius, for example, approaches it in his argument, and asks how a man comes to think of one particular object and not some other, he simply alludes, as if it were in need of no explanation, to the circumstance of the mind being able to attend, to abstract, to concentrate itself. In other words, he takes for granted a spontaneity—a power of initiation, selection, and determination—which his primitive atoms are not supposed to possess, but which he naturally enough, if somewhat illogically, assumes to exist and operate.

After all, too, Epicurus was no metaphysician, and in this question of the will he seems rather to be arguing against extreme theories already in vogue than adding to them a new one of his own. The free-will controversy, if it be an intelligible dispute at all, and not rather a battle in which each side fights not against the other, but against an imaginary enemy of its own creation, had scarcely formulated itself definitely in his time. What Epicurus has in view seems to be on the one hand a popular illusion, and on the other a metaphysical dogma. The popular illusion is a belief in the efficacy of chance or fortune; the metaphysical dogma is that of fatalism, or necessitarianism. According to the Stoics, who derived their doctrine from Plato and Aristotle, every act and event is regarded as part of a vast pre-ordained order from the bonds of which there is no escape. *Fata*, says Seneca, *volentem ducunt, nolentem trahunt*—"The willing are led, the unwilling dragged by the

fates." But willing or unwilling must alike testify to the supremacy of destiny. Our fancied independence is the veil which we draw over our inevitable participation in the great circles of the wheel of providential doom. It is against this lordship of the universal law that Epicurus raises his protest. For him there is no law higher than the law of kind ; each species has its appointed limits, which it cannot transgress if it is to live and flourish. But there is no higher law to which the species is subject—except the law of chance, which presides at the formation of kinds and of worlds. It enters into no grand plan, makes part of no system. So long as it obeys its own laws it is free. And such is the freedom of man. To recognize the end or limit of his nature, and to gain freedom by acting in constant accordance with the conditions thus discerned, is the part of the wise man, of the philosopher.

On the other hand, man is not the mere creature of chances, and least of all in proportion to his progress in wisdom. Intelligence renders him superior to fortune, or at least diminishes to the lowest point the effects of chance and circumstance. Within the limits laid down by his own specific nature, man may, if he will, be above all external forces. Thus Epicurus contemns both fate and chance. However much he indicates that in a formed character the actions flow from self as a concentrated and self-contained cause, while in an unformed and immature being they are a varying resultant of passions from within and impressions from without, still there is a

residuum of spontaneity which he seems unwilling to ignore, though unable to explain. Man, like the atoms, has something incalculable in him; even as in the soul there was a fourth "unnamed" essence. The anonymous and the spontaneous lurk at the bottom of these explanations.

Neither in life nor in death, therefore, can anything entail defeat or cause a regret for the wise man who has freed himself from the blindness born in his flesh, and learned what humanity really requires. "The reasonable man," says Philodemus, in his treatise on Death, "having learnt that he can acquire all that is needed for a happy life, from that moment, having, as it were, prepared himself for burial, walks about and reaps profit from a single day as if it were an age."[1] Once for all he dismisses the thought of death from his mind when he has once for all grasped its necessity and the utter indifference to us of the state which succeeds it. "The free man," says Spinoza, "thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is not a meditation of death, but of life."[2] Convinced that death is an absolute end with no other life beyond, his motto is not, as is vulgarly said, "Eat, drink, for to-morrow we die"; but he argues that, though we may die to-morrow, still the fear of death should not poison and embitter to-day.

The annihilation of the personality by death is not an idea peculiar to the Epicureans; it appears in

[1] Gomperz, in the *Hermes*, XII. 223.
[2] Spinoza, *Ethic.*, IV. 67.

ancient writers in various tones, from solemn enthusiasm to frivolous mockery. The passionate rejection of immortality by the elder Pliny is well known. "What accursed frenzy, to think that life is to be renewed by death. And where are those who have been brought into being ever to find rest, if the spirit retains its consciousness in the world on high, and the shade in the world below? Verily this sweet fancy wherewith men beguile themselves deprives us of the chief blessing of nature, destroys death, and doubles the pain of dying by reflection on what is to be hereafter. For, even if present life is sweet, who can find it sweet to *have* lived? How much easier and surer were it for each to believe himself, and to take his experience of the time that preceded his birth as an argument that he need feel no anxiety for the future?"[1] In the second and third centuries, the phrases, "To security," "To eternal rest," "To everlasting sleep" (*securitati*, *æternæ quieti*, *æterno somno*), are not unfrequently found on tombstones. The prospect of an utter end to existence seems to have been felt by some, of those times, as no gloomy idea, but as a welcome hope of unbroken and unending rest. In others, the gross sensuality of some aspects of Roman character is conspicuously displayed. "I was nothing: I am nothing: and thou who art alive, eat, drink, play, come." "All that is man's own is what he eats and drinks" is the refrain of many of these inscriptions on the tombs.[2] In Greek epitaphs

[1] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII. 188-190.

[2] See Friedländer, Sittengeschichte Roms, III. 616, seqq.

the denial of immortality is less obvious perhaps; but in all the thought is turned backward to the life that is past, and seldom to the life that is to come, and the seriousness of the tomb is for them not incompatible with a note of cheerfulness and even of mirth.

Ancient philosophy was divided on the question of immortality. The school of Aristotle rejected the doctrine of personal existence after death; and though the Stoics in general approximated towards it, still Panaetius, the most original of their Roman adherents, departed in this as in so many other points from the doctrine of his school. With the Platonists, on the contrary, and especially with those who combined Platonic with Pythagorean ideas, the immortality of the soul was a cardinal tenet. But apart from philosophic opinion, two facts seem tolerably certain which bear upon this point. The great majority of the Greek and Roman world believed in some sort of after-existence; but they differed largely in the minutiæ of belief. And, secondly, though the conceptions of the other world in general do not appear to have cast any prevailing gloom over this life, yet, if we can trust Plato, Epicurus, and Lucretius, the general conviction of a judgment to come, where the deeds done in this life would receive their reward and punishment, seems to have been widely felt, and to have been, for priests and prophets, a fruitful soil. Indulgences for sin, propitiation of impiety, sacramental atonement, not to mention magic and baser forms of superstition, flourished alongside of Epicu-

reanism all through its career, and probably reached their maximum in the first and second centuries of the Christian era. For all such modes of salvation Epicurus declared there was no need. Man alone could save himself; he needed neither redeemer nor priest. To know and obey the law of Nature was the only and the certain way to happiness and goodness. If help were needed in the work of life, it could be found in the sympathy of a true friend. On earth was the portion of man : on earth blessedness could be either won or lost; and death closed all accounts. Goodness carried with it its present reward : the prize of virtue was not postponed.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHIEF GOOD.

We may now pass on to what would, in ordinary parlance, be described as the moral theory or ethical system of Epicurus. On this topic we get little help from Lucretius, whose poem breaks off before it has even completed the theory of natural phenomena. But in Diogenes Laertius, in Cicero and Seneca, there are a number of fragmentary statements, and even of tolerably connected passages, which help us to form in outline at least a conception of the Epicurean Ethics. But we must not expect too much from this title. We shall find no code of duties, no principle of obligation, no abstract standard of morals; and still less any discussion of the moral faculties. In morals we are referred as elsewhere to the guidance of feeling. In feeling, properly interpreted, we have our rule; and we have only to use our intellect to see that we are not led astray from obedience to its voice. Our feeling unequivocally tells us the general character of what we should pursue, viz., pleasure. It is the business of our reason to prevent this object being lost by injudicious pursuit, or by mistaking a less pleasure for a greater. Pleasure always is our aim; the natural aim of every living being, the end or law

of nature. It needs some care, however, to discriminate real pleasure from pretended. We are corrupted, we inherit a perverse taste; and it is the office of philosophy to purify our feelings, to make our taste for pleasure true.

As an introduction, we may take a letter of Epicurus in which he presents a summary of his theory of life and conduct; it is given by Diogenes Laertius:—[1]

"EPICURUS *to* MENŒCEUS.

"Be not slack to seek wisdom when thou art young, nor weary in the search thereof when thou art grown old. For no age is too early or too late for the health of the soul. And he who says that the season for philosophy has not yet come, and that it is passed and gone, is like one who should say that the season for happiness has not yet come, or that it has passed away. Therefore, both old and young ought to seek wisdom, that so a man as age comes over him may be young in good things, because of the grace of what has been, and while he is young may likewise be old, because he has no fear of the things which are to come. Exercise thyself, therefore, in the things which bring happiness; for verily, while it is with thee thou wilt have everything, and when it is not, thou wilt do everything if so thou mayest have it.

"Those things which without ceasing I have declared unto thee, those do and exercise thyself therein, holding them to be the elements of right

[1] Diogenes Laertius, X. 122-135.

life. First, believe that God is a being blessed and immortal, according to the notion of a God commonly held amongst men; and so believing, thou shalt not affirm of him aught that is contrary to immortality or that agrees not with blessedness, but shalt believe about him whatsoever may uphold both his blessedness and his immortality. For verily there are gods, and the knowledge of them is manifest; but they are not such as the multitude believe, seeing that men do not uphold steadfastly the notions they currently believe. Not the man who denies the gods worshipped by the multitude, but he who affirms of the gods what the multitude believes about them, is truly impious. For the utterances of the multitude about the gods are not true preconceptions, but false assumptions; according to which the greatest evils that happen to the wicked, and the blessings which happen to the good, are held to come from the hand of the gods. Seeing that, as they are always most familiar with their own good qualities, they take pleasure in the sight of qualities like their own, and reject as alien whatever is not of their kind.

"Accustom thyself in the belief that death is nothing to us, for good and evil are only where they are felt, and death is the absence of all feeling: therefore, a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes enjoyable the mortality of life, not by adding to years an illimitable time, but by taking away the yearning after immortality. For in life there can be nothing to fear to him who has thoroughly apprehended that there is nothing to cause fear in

what time we are not alive. Foolish, therefore, is the man who says that he fears death, not because it will pain when it comes, but because it pains in the prospect. Whatsoever causes no annoyance when it is present causes only a groundless pain by the expectation thereof. Death, therefore, the most awful of evils, is nothing to us, seeing that when we are, death is not yet, and when death comes, then we are not. It is nothing, then, either to the living or the dead, for it is not found with the living, and the dead exist no longer. But in the world, at one time men seek to escape death as the greatest of all evils, and at another time yearn for it as a rest from the evils in life. The mere absence of life is no object of fear, for to live is not set in view beside it, nor is it regarded as an evil. And even as men choose of food, not merely and simply the larger lot, but the most pleasant, so the wise seek to enjoy the time which is most pleasant, and not merely that which is longest. And he who admonishes the young men to live well, and the old men to make a good end, speaks foolishly, not merely because of the desirableness of life, but because the same exercise at once teaches to live well and to die well. Much worse is he who says that it were best not to be born, but when once one is born, to pass with greatest speed the gates of Hades. If he, in truth, believes this, why does he not depart from this life? There is nothing to hinder him, if he has truly come to this conclusion. If he speaks only in mockery, his words are meaningless among people who believe in them not.

"Thou must remember that the future is neither wholly ours, nor wholly not ours, so that neither may we wholly wait for it as if it were sure to come, nor wholly despair as if it were not to come.

"Thou must also keep in mind that of desires some are natural, and some are groundless; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some are natural only. And of the necessary desires, some are necessary if we are to be happy, and some if the body is to remain unperturbed, and some if we are even to live. By the clear and certain understanding of these things we learn to make every preference and aversion, so that the body may have health and the soul tranquillity, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life. For the end of all our actions is to be free from pain and fear; and when once we have attained this, all the tempest of the soul is laid, seeing that the living creature has not to go to find something that is wanting, or to seek something else by which the good of the soul and of the body will be fulfilled. When we need pleasure, is, when we are grieved because of the absence of pleasure; but when we feel no pain, then we no longer stand in need of pleasure. Wherefore we call pleasure the alpha and omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. From it is the commencement of every choice and every aversion, and to it we come back, and make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing.

"And since pleasure is our first and native good, for that reason we do not choose every pleasure

whatsoever, but ofttimes pass over many pleasures when a greater annoyance ensues from them. And ofttimes we consider pains superior to pleasures, and submit to the pain for a long time, when it is attended for us with a greater pleasure. All pleasure, therefore, because of its kinship with our nature, is a good, but it is not in all cases our choice, even as every pain is an evil, though pain is not always, and in every case, to be shunned. It is, however, by measuring one against another, and by looking at the conveniences and inconveniences, that all these things must be judged. Sometimes we treat the good as an evil, and the evil, on the contrary, as a good; and we regard independence of outward goods as a great good, not so as in all cases to use little, but so as to be contented with little. if we have not much, being thoroughly persuaded that they have the sweetest enjoyment of luxury who stand least in need of it, and that whatever is natural is easily procured, and only the vain and worthless hard to win. Plain fare gives as much pleasure as a costly diet, when once the pain due to want is removed; and bread and water confer the highest pleasure when they are brought to hungry lips. To habituate self, therefore, to plain and inexpensive diet gives all that is needed for health, and enables a man to meet the necessary requirements of life without shrinking, and it places us in a better frame when we approach at intervals a costly fare, and renders us fearless of fortune.

"When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and

aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal, or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood by some who are either ignorant and prejudiced for other views, or inclined to misinterpret our statements. By pleasure, we mean the absence of pain in the body and trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking feasts and of revelry, not the pleasures of sexual love, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a splendid table, which produce a pleasant life: it is sober reasoning, searching out the reasons for every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which greatest tumults take possession of the soul. Of all this, the beginning, and the greatest good, is prudence. Wherefore, prudence is a more precious thing even than philosophy: from it grow all the other virtues, for it teaches that we cannot lead a life of pleasure which is not also a life of prudence, honour, and justice; nor lead a life of prudence, honour, and justice which is not also a life of pleasure. For the virtues have grown into one with a pleasant life, and a pleasant life is inseparable from them.

"Who then is superior, in thy judgment, to such a man? He holds a holy belief concerning the gods, and is altogether without fears about death; he has diligently considered the end fixed by nature, and has understood how easily the limit of good things can be satisfied and procured, and how either the length or the strength of evils is but slight. He has rejected fate which some have introduced as universal mistress, no less than chance, in respect of what

is due to human agency, for he sees that fate destroys responsibility, and that fortune is inconstant; as for our actions, there is no lord and master over them, and it is to them that blame and praise naturally ensue. Better were it, indeed, to believe the legend of the gods, than be in bondage to the destiny taught by the physical philosophers; for the theological myth gives a faint hope of deprecating divine wrath by honouring the gods, while the fate of the philosophers is deaf to all supplications. Nor does he hold chance to be a god, as the world in general does, for in the acts of God there is no disorder, nor to be a cause, though an uncertain one, for he believes that good or evil is not given by it to men so as to make life blessed, though it supplies the starting-point of great good and great evil. He believes that the misfortune of the wise is better than the prosperity of the fool. It is better, in short, that what is well-judged in action should not owe its successful issue to the aid of chance.

"Exercise thyself in these and kindred precepts day and night, both by thyself and with him who is like unto thee; and never, either in waking or in dream, wilt thou be disturbed, but wilt live as a god amongst men. For in nothing does he resemble a mortal creature, the man who lives in immortal blessedness."

Thus unequivocally does Epicureanism proclaim pleasure to be the end of nature—the first good, common to the whole race of man. The announcement of such a doctrine naturally gave rise to a

chorus of reproving and protesting voices. Even if it be true that we are irresistibly urged towards pleasure by an impulse of our nature, it is our duty, say the objectors, to guard against the temptations thus arising. We have nobler aims to live for than mere pleasure. Honour and duty demand our allegiance: obligations bind us to our family and friends and to our country. Pleasure is of the earth, but virtue calls us to make ourselves worthy of heaven. A mere pleasure-seeker is of all beings the most miserable: his search is hopeless: and the fruits he plucks are but as apples of Sodom and turn into ashes between his teeth. The man of pleasure must inevitably, it is said, cry out, Vanity of vanities: all is vanity. Worse than this: his pleasures will become more and more sensual, degrading, and animal. As life goes on, his jaded sensibilities require more poignant excitements to ward off the attacks of ennui. A life of pleasure hardens the heart, and the sense of enjoyment comes to find a peculiar delight in the sight of others suffering. Domitian at Rome and Catherine the Second of Russia are pointed out as the examples warning against lawless lust for pleasures. That Epicureanism should inculcate a lesson which bears such fruits seems argument enough to condemn it.

In all of this the truth is marred by exaggeration. There is a long interval between the statement that pleasure is the natural law, and the recommendation to pursue pleasures everywhere and above all things. The former can hardly be disputed, when explained;

the latter is unwise and, possibly, impracticable advice. To do justice to the doctrine of Epicurus we should never forget that it is to a large extent the reaction and protest of an opposition. Its statements to be understood must be taken in connection with the doctrines to which they are antagonistic. Every thesis loses half its meaning, and almost all its truth, when completely dissevered from its antithesis. The expression of a dogma in such a case is misleading. The author, strong in his sense of a correction to be made, hardly gives full place to the large and important body of doctrine which he accepts without correction. His exposition is fragmentary and unbalanced, and requires to be interpreted with caution. Because something is passed over in silence, we must not infer that it is denied. Every revelation of new truth, every attempt at reform, always and necessarily assumes and tacitly embodies with itself much that was old.

Epicureanism need not be assumed, therefore, to abolish or contradict the old morality altogether, although it proposes to put it upon a new foundation, and denies the especial principles on which the virtues were sometimes said to be founded. In the moral systems of Plato and Aristotle a very subordinate and undignified place was assigned to pleasure. When Aristotle in his "Ethics" attempts to find the characteristic mark of virtue, he sees it in the circumstance that the end or aim of the action is τὸ καλὸν.[1]

[1] Arist., *Ethics*, IV. 2, 1, &c.

The beautiful—the idea of an objective perfection and symmetry which is to be maintained—the entirely ideal motive of correspondence with an existent law of rectitude,—the desire to reflect a moral beauty in our individual conduct—that is the sunlight which elevates acts out of mechanical obedience into conscious actualization of an ethical world or moral cosmos. The presupposition here, as in Plato, is that of an order which exists before us, of an ideal perfection which we do not make, and can but approximate to. Of the origin and authority of this fundamental idea of his ethical system Aristotle can scarcely be said to render any account. What the "beautiful" is, and how it comes to sway our conduct, is rather removed from his range. Nor can Plato be said to carry more conviction when he asserts, what in its way is true enough, that these conceptions are the very ante-natal dower of the soul—the ideas which mind has been familiar with before it sank into the darkness of this sense-world in which we live. The interesting question still remains how we as human beings come to shake off the confusing influences of nature, and learn to see the idea of goodness in its very truth. But Plato, though he attacks this question, does not answer it. He discusses an analogous question, viz., how the statesman is to be equipped for his duties; and to the statesman thus formed and perfected he entrusts the task of telling the ordinary human being what is to be done and what is not to be done. And a like criticism may be passed on Aristotle. They both had in view an objective order and system which stood

above the likes and feelings of men; and a willing conformity to this order was the aim which they assigned to the legislator in his normative action in society. So long as there was a tolerable agreement between this ideal order and the actual constitutions under which men lived, so long their theory might be accepted. But when even the blindest eye could no longer refuse to see in the existing political forms only a tissue of vice, injustice, and baseness, then the ideal order, bereft of its sensuous vicegerent, the State, must collapse or find another support.

The ancient sages before Epicurus had condemned pleasure, and opposed it to virtue. A few of them went so far as to carry out the implication, and to assert the absolute incompatibility of pleasure and virtue. Aristotle had not been so extravagant. In pleasure he recognised the sign that the capacity and tendency to good which habit and discipline had produced had at length become a second nature.[1] He had spoken of pleasure as the accompaniment of such action as combined the fullest expansion of a natural power in the agent with the most satisfactory condition of the objects in which it found room for its exercise. Pleasure was the concomitant of action when the perfect agent found a perfect medium for his action. But the character of the active power made a profound difference in the estimate to be formed of the pleasure. There were higher pleasures, and there were lower pleasures. This distinction of

[1] Arist., *Ethics*, II. 2.

the worth or worthlessness of different pleasures rests upon the presumption that there is a hierarchical system of ends in life, that some acts or things are intrinsically worth more than others, quite apart from the pleasure which individuals may derive from them. It rests on a belief in ideas and on ideal truth : on the faith that man is only a member of a great order, an everlasting realm of truth and goodness, which receives him when he comes into the world, and which connects him with the past and the future, as well as with his contemporaries in the present.

Such an order Epicureanism ignores. It isolates a man from his membership of the body politic ; it cuts him off from anything beyond this life by the doctrine of man's absolute mortality. For Epicureanism man is a sentient being, capable of pleasure and pain, and possessed of an intelligence which enables him to take forethought for both. Around him are other sentient beings similarly circumstanced, with whom it is often necessary, and sometimes convenient, that he should come into contact and relationship. But these connections are lax, accidental, and temporary ; the unions so formed are transient, and owe their existence and maintenance to the convenience of individuals. They have no subsistence in themselves, no rights as against individuals, no powers to enforce obligations or require duties. The individual being, susceptible to pains and pleasures, is the starting-point and the standard. Nothing exists outside him which should thwart and check the claims of his person to enjoyment, nothing of an

ideal kind, at any rate. To some extent, however, the bond which is thus taken off is reimposed as the easier and lighter yoke of friendship.

Antiquity is almost unanimous in the praises it bestows upon the friendly affection which prevailed in the communities of Epicureans.[1] Friendship enhances the charm of life; it helps to lighten sorrows and to heighten joys by fellowship. In itself, the fact of friendship bears witness to something beyond the mere individual, perhaps—but it speaks only imperfectly and indistinctly. Reflection seems to show that all friendship has a selfish basis, and is built upon utility. In every union of affection the cynical observer is able to point to something which may be interpreted into the presence of an earthly element, a self-regarding consideration. Nor is the cynical observer to be pronounced in error. The self-regarding cannot be entirely absent from anything human; the absolutely and wholly unselfish is the divine. But the cynical observer is wrong in emphasizing this fact to the exclusion of another side. The prophet and the reformer are not to be regarded as hypocrites because even in their holiest fervours and their purest counsels the absence of self is never perfect and undisputed. Rather were it well to note the different contents and structure of the self which is operative in different individuals. There is a wide interval between the self which excludes all others in antagonism and the self which includes them in love.

[1] Cicero, *Acad. Pr.*, II. 115; *De Fin.*, I. 20 65.

Yet for an ordinary world, the cynicism which reminds us that utility is the creator of law and morality is not altogether without its value. Harsh as it may sound against more ideal or more sentimental principles, the assertion of utilitarianism has at least the advantage of fighting against an unreasoning conservatism adhering to the past with blind tenacity. Even if utility be not an adequate formula to account for the existence of the organization of human society on its present basis, it at least affords a mark for the reformer, and suggests ameliorations. In the great words in which Plato proclaimed the rights of reason against authority and tradition,[1] there is not and never will be finer phrase than this:—Only the useful is truly beautiful and noble, only the harmful truly unsightly and bad.

But the basis of utilitarianism may be different, as the doctrine itself varies. It may rest on a philanthropic sentiment, a humanitarian feeling. Such a foundation must to Epicurus have seemed vague and uncertain; and he builds his creed accordingly on a more solid foundation; more solid, that is, if we compare sentiment with sentiment. He bases it on the natural feeling of pleasure, and on the general gravitation of all human kind towards pleasure. No more than other writers is Epicurus able to give a definition of pleasure. To know what is meant by being pleased we must go to consciousness, to feeling. "The state of pleasure," says Professor Bain,

[1] Plato, *Republic*, v. 457.

"is an ultimate, indefinable experience of the mind. The fact itself is known to each person's consciousness: the modes, varieties, degrees, collaterals, and effects of it, may be stated in propositions."[1] In a sense, it is quite true that every one does understand what is meant by pleasure. Unfortunately, however, the word pleasure, like all words of this 'abstract' description, easily becomes ambiguous. It denotes not merely the abstract and general relation in virtue of which an act or object is termed pleasant, but also the particular objects or acts themselves which give pleasure to some, or perhaps to the majority of mankind. Like other abstract terms, it is interpreted and defined by the habits and experience of each individual. It is specified into various concrete pleasures, and identified with certain things which produce pleasure. Every man has pleasures of his own, and the cases are rare where the same thing gives pleasure to everybody.

The phrase "pursue pleasure," is therefore somewhat elliptical. Strictly speaking, we do not and cannot pursue pleasure; which is as great an abstraction as the pursuit of truth, perhaps even a greater; for the latter, at least, is in some degree objective and abiding, whereas pleasure is transient and subjective. What we pursue are certain objects of desire, the attainment of which causes pleasure. Pleasure in itself, if we may use such an expression, is neither one thing nor another: what it is depends entirely

[1] "The Emotions and the Will," p. 12.

on the nature of the person, and the character of the object. No so-called pleasure has the power of producing pleasure, inevitably and in all circumstances. Yet for this reason, it may be said what we desire is not a thing, but rather an action. It is the eating, and not the food, which gives pleasure to the hungry.

There is a controversy, in some respects verbal, raised on this point. It may be said, that the object of a desire is not pleasure, but some special thing or act. "All particular appetites and passions," says Bishop Butler,[1] "are towards external things themselves, distinct from the pleasure arising from them." Action, which should have in view no particular object but only the general end of pleasure, would be so indefinite and vague as to be unreal. The actual appetites of the actual human being go straight at their specific ends. It is only with reflection and thought that the voluptuary who pursues pleasure for pleasure's sake becomes in any degree possible. A mere liking for pleasant things does not make a voluptuary, or few would escape the name. To become a voluptuary, a human being must care for and desire nothing in these pleasant things but the pleasure which they bring to his individual self. Every concrete reality fades away into nothingness in his eyes except his own consciousness, and the honey which can be extracted by him from the vast world, for whose intrinsic existence and fortunes he has no interest whatever. To such a person, if he can be

[1] Sermon XI. (On the Love of our Neighbour.)

said anywhere to exist in full-fledged reality, the doctrine that pleasure is the sole object of desires may be applied.

No such assertion does Epicurus, however, make. The end of nature, he says, is pleasure. Pleasure, and not pain, is the end towards which all things in the world tend as their natural and normal condition. But what are pleasure and pain? It is necessary to look at them together. No doubt it may be said that there is a third or neutral state, which is neither pleasure nor pain. There are certainly many states of consciousness, which we should not in ordinary language describe as either pleasant or painful. But whether that gives a ground for asserting that these states are absolutely without such quality, are wholly indifferent, is a question which seems difficult to answer in the affirmative. It may, however, be convenient to assume the existence of some such point of transition and indifference as a terminus from which we ordinarily measure the degree of pleasure or of pain, or as an average level of no very definable character, and liable to divergence on two sides.

According to Plato, however, there are two categories of pleasures ordinarily so called.[1] There are pleasures which rest, to some extent, upon an illusion; they seem pleasant, that is, when set in contrast with a background of pain. In themselves they are nothing positive: they are no more than the absence or the removal of uneasiness. They presuppose an

[1] Plato, *Republic*, IX. 584.

antecedent pain: they are the satisfaction of a want. Of this kind, for example, is the pleasure derived from eating by the hungry man. These pleasures are unreal and untrue. On the other hand, there are pleasures,—as an instance, Plato gives the pleasures of smell,—which are preceded by no pain. They accompany certain exertions of activity or certain states of susceptibility: they come unsought, and leave no sense of want behind them. Such pleasures are positive and real.

It may be doubted if this distinction rests on wholly satisfactory ground. The sense of want or desire which accompanies certain pleasures as their condition, is probably to be explained by their close connection with our nature and character, whether original or acquired. The pleasures of smell, to take Plato's instance, excite no previous desires in most cases, because they have little connection with our well-being; and the pleasure they do produce may, perhaps, be due directly or indirectly to an association with life-giving and beneficial function. Perhaps, too, the facility with which certain pleasures may be represented by imagination in the objects which habitually cause them, has something to do with the feeling of uneasiness which Plato alludes to. At any rate, all pleasures seem to be, at least in the case of those who feel them most acutely, attended by the sense of want. But, of course, there is a difference of another origin which has a bearing upon the point. The pleasures of the sensualist are much less within his own power than those of the intellectualist. The

former is in a large degree dependent on the favour of external circumstances, and thus inevitably he must occasionally be deprived of a favourite gratification, must suffer want and pain. The intellect carries its own resources, at least, to a large extent, and is less dependent on external help. But even in the case of intellectual delights, the absence of intellectual exercise would be felt as a pain and loss, and a man would put himself to pain and trouble to recover his mental ease and freedom. The various conditions under which pleasure is experienced seem to point in the direction of the relativity of pleasure and pain. Whether as the removal of an obstruction, the conquest of a difficulty, the replenishment of a void, the satisfaction of an uneasiness, the re-establishment of an equilibrium, the enlargement of an imprisoned force, pleasure presupposes something of its opposite.

It is in this sense that Epicurus defines pleasure: "When once the pain arising from deficiency has been removed, the pleasure in the flesh admits of no further augmentation, but only of variation: and similarly the limit of the pleasure of the mind is reached, when the causes of our principal mental fears have been removed."[1] The limit of pleasure, according to the stock phrase, was the eradication of everything painful.[2] When so much has been gained,

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 144.

[2] *ἡ παντὸς τοῦ ἀλγοῦντος ὑπεξαίρεσις.* From papyrus 1102, p. 10 (Oxford copies), it appears that the texts even then varied in this standard phrase. Some omitted *παντὸς*, and others read *ἐξαίρεσις.*

no further increase in the amount of the pleasure is possible. Subsequently, of course, variety may be introduced by more costly appliances, but the net result will be the same as that gained by simpler methods. And for that reason it is a wise precaution to find out experimentally the simplest and least expensive mode of gratifying our wants, not with any ascetic intention, but simply to prepare for a state of affairs when the more costly means is not at our command. If it be said that the variety and vicissitude of luxuries also satisfies what is to many a real want, Epicurus replies by instituting a distinction between our wants. Of the desires, some are pronounced to be natural and necessary; others to be natural, but not necessary; a third class includes desires which are neither natural nor necessary, but due merely to fancy and fashion. This division of desires and pleasures into the natural and the artificial comes from older sources: it is laid down, for example, by the Cynics. But it is in the application of the distinction to hedonism that the important point lies for Epicureanism. Epicurus, like the Stoics in his own time, and like Rousseau and his adherents in the last century, tries to find in nature a help against fashion and civilization. It is nothing to have cast away the rags of superstition, if we still retain the artificial vestments of human culture. Avoid all culture, was the advice of Epicurus.[1] He is at war with

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 6; Plutarch, *Non posse suav.*, XIII. 1.

the artificialities of life. Nature had made man upright, but he had sought out many inventions. An exclusive literary training was leading men away from the perception of the truth of life, to spend their days in a hollow world of unreality, filled with æsthetic vanities, with political pomps, with religious anxieties. To the doctrine that poetry and art had a useful end, the Epicureans opposed a denial; poetry might be justified on some grounds, but certainly not for its utility.[1] If the hard-worked statesman, said Epicurus in his work on Kingdom,[2] desires relaxation, let him seek it in the tales of war, or even in rough common jesting, but not in æsthetic discussions, on topics of music and poetry; let him seek his amusement in spectacles and pageants, in the drama and the concert, but not in critical or philological investigations of the principles of art. Epicurus is impatient of the nebulous regions which only exist, according to him, for highly sensitive and sentimental souls.

In this way Epicureanism seems to approach to a point of view at the opposite pole of opinion, viz. Cynicism or Stoicism. "Man needs but little here," is its assertion. "Riches, according to nature, are of limited extent, and can easily be procured; but the wealth craved after by vain fancies knows neither end nor limit." "He who has understood the limits of life, knows how easy to get is all that takes away

[1] Sextus Empir., *Adv. Musicos*, c. 27.
[2] Plutarch, *Non posse suav.*, XIII. 1.

the pain of want, and all that is required to make our life perfect at every point. In this way he has no need of anything which implies a contest."[1] Thus Epicurus can scarcely be identified with the ordinary advocates of pleasure. His hedonism is of a sober and reflective kind. It rests on the assumption that pleasure is the end or natural aim, but, it adds, that the business of philosophy is to show within what limits that end is attainable. Thus, if, on one hand, it declares against the philosophers that pleasure is the law of nature, and that ideal ends ought to promote the welfare of humanity, it declares on the other against the multitude that the ordinary pursuit of pleasure, and the common ideas of its possibilities, are erroneous. To the ordinary vision the search for pleasure is endless: one beckons after another: illimitable vistas of new delights seem to extend before the ravished eyes. All this is a delusion, says Epicurus. True pleasure is satisfaction, and not a yearning, which, though momentarily stilled, bursts forth again.

It would almost seem a misnomer to call this pleasure. As true politeness, so-called, often differs widely with what is usually understood by politeness, so true pleasure seems far apart from pleasure in its vulgar meaning. A body free from pain, and a mind released from perturbations, is the ideal of Epicurean life. The prominent point, in short, is not the doctrine that pleasure is the natural end. That Epicurus asserts as a universal law of animated existence.

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 144, 146.

But what he emphasizes is rather the conditions under which this end is possible for man. He seems, at first sight, to describe pleasure, as Schopenhauer, as a merely negative state, as the absence of pain. It would, however, be a grave mistake were we to suppose that because this condition is negatively described, it was a mere abstraction or negation. The imperturbability of the Epicurean was not an ascetic or an insensate withdrawal from all life and action. But it certainly introduced a rational and reflective aspect into the doctrine of hedonism, as it had been practised or taught by Aristippus of Cyrene. The Cyrenaic preached enjoyment of the present moment: he took pleasure as he found it scattered all over the earth. He did not balance pleasure against pleasure. His theory was, that as pleasure is the one thing desirable, the main aim of education should be to fit men to enjoy with all their heart, to give them that strength of mind and body, which enables them to take pleasure in anything. He said, Learn to enjoy: at each moment the absolute good of life is before you, and you ought to attain it. You need not wait for the lapse of time, so as to see how it has turned out upon the whole. Comparison and reflection are the foe of pleasure. You must be able to throw yourself wholly into what this moment presents, as if this moment were eternity with no before or after. When another moment comes, you treat it in like manner. Thus, while you enjoy each in its turn to the full, you remain detached from its control, you are still your

own master, your action creates no obligation, you are equally free to enjoy what comes next.

To all of this the reply of the Epicurean is that such a doctrine, if practicable at all, is only possible under exceptional circumstances. To carry it out implies a previous training and reflection on life as a whole, on its capacities and its needs, on the laws of nature, and the relations of men to one another. A happy tact, a natural taste, may, in peculiarly gifted natures, and in favourable circumstances, enable a man to enjoy, without running upon the shoals and quicksands which beset the course of the pleasure-seeker. But in the vast majority of cases, where no æsthetic instincts guide the decision, the search for pleasure proves a chase after a phantom, which allures only to deceive. For "the flesh takes the limits of pleasure to be endless, and an endless time would be needed to provide it; but the mind, having learned the limit and the end of the flesh, and having cast away fears about the distant future, has made for us life perfect and adequate, and we no longer need infinite time. And yet it has not been an exile from pleasure, and when the time comes to depart from life, it closes with no sense of having fallen short of felicity."[1] In other words, if we really and truly enjoy the moment, we can only do so by having taken, some time or other, a view beyond the moment, and having learned to see each moment in the light of the whole life, of our nature as a whole. We

[1] Diogenes, x. 145.

must refer each action to the end and aim of nature, and not throw ourselves blindly into what promises pleasure.

"No pleasure is evil in itself, but the objects productive of certain pleasures may lead to annoyances many times greater than the pleasure."[1] Hence the place of prudence or reflection in the Epicurean system, as the chief of the virtues. But it must not be supposed that the function of φρόνησις is in Epicurus any more than in Aristotle, merely to weigh pleasure against pleasure, so as to choose the heavier. Prudence, here as there, means the intelligent conception of human nature, as a whole, in its limits and its powers. It is not a fitful and casual agent, interfering with the natural bent towards pleasure, and exhorting it to hear reason, but a deep-settled and permanent character—the second nature of the Epicurean sage—which acts like an instinct to preserve from extravagance and excess. If reflection, indeed, were employed to choose amongst pleasures with a conscious reasoning at every moment, such a process would certainly be a kill-joy. But this is only the case with the learner, who is endeavouring to correct his natural errors. As he advances in the path of perfection, the feeling of opposition between the habitual tendency fostered by evil influences and the rational law of nature grows fainter, till at last, in the character of the ideal sage, it disappears altogether. Once for all, the wise man has counted the

[1] Diogenes, x. 141.

cost, and learnt the real worth, of various enjoyments; he has learned to discriminate apparent from real pleasures, and can turn away without a single sigh of regret from many entertainments which the world esteems highly.

This, then, is one point of contrast between pleasure, as understood by the Cyrenaics and Epicureans. With the former it was the pleasure of the moment, of action and excitement: life, as a whole, did not enter into the account—it was taken as a series of moments, and each moment deemed an eternity. With the latter it was the pleasure of a life, in which the pleasures of the several moments took their place in a system and modified each other. The pleasure of the Cyrenaics was a keen sensation —in motion, κίνησις, as the technical phrase described it: that of the Epicureans was more tranquil and sedate—an habitual and permanent rather than a changeful and temporary enjoyment.[1] With the Cyrenaic it was the pleasure of the healthy and vigorous natural man; with the Epicurean, of the philosopher, and, perhaps, to some extent, of the weakly valetudinarian. Epicureanism could thus appeal to the many, whilst Cyrenaic theories could only find an echo in specially-endowed personalities. Few in any age can stand for a portrait like that drawn by Cicero,[2] of M. Thorius Balbus. "This man was a citizen of Lanuvium. He lived in such a way

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 136.
[2] Cicero, *De Fin.*, II. 20, 63.

as to miss none of the finest pleasures; for in all kinds of pleasure he was an amateur, connoisseur, and adept. So free was he from superstition that he treated with scorn many of the sacred places and religious rites of his country: and yet so fearless of death that he fell on the battle-field fighting for his fatherland. He limited his desires, not at the point fixed by Epicurus, but by his own satiety: yet never so as to injure his health. His exercise was arranged so as to make him come hungry and thirsty to dinner; his food was at once calculated to please the palate and promote digestion, and his wine was selected of such quality as to give pleasure and produce no injury. As for the other enjoyments which Epicurus declares to be an essential part of the conception of happiness, he tasted them, too. He did not suffer from pain; yet when it did come he bore it manfully, trusting perhaps more to a physician than a philosopher. He had a splendid colour, sound health, great popularity; in a word, his life was brimful of every variety of pleasure." But people with all these advantages are on the whole rare, and a gospel for their benefit is scarcely needed. Epicureanism addressed itself to a frailer and humbler multitude, who neither in circumstances nor in personal endowments were equal to making the world comport itself to their demands. It proposed to enable them, by discipline, to gain all that the others acquired by wealth, position, and innate force. It preached that pleasure was not restricted to the rich or to the mighty, but was equally attainable by the poor and the lowly. It levelled all ranks and

equalized men, by showing that it is the variety and superficial glitter of pleasure and not its essence which imposed upon the powerful and their admirers. Epicurus thus took from Cynicism its representation of the difference between artificial and natural pleasures and desires; but he employed the distinction for different purposes, and with other presuppositions. He did not, like them, allow the means to become an end.

It is sometimes put as another difference between Epicurus and his Cyrenaic predecessors, that while the latter put the bodily pleasures highest, the former gave preference to the pleasures of the mind. It may, of course, be said that as the mind, whether as *animus* or as *anima* (to adopt a Lucretian distinction [1]), is, according to Epicurus, only a species of body or matter, any distinction between the mental and bodily in such a system can be of little importance. This, however, would be to confuse the explanation of a difference with the difference itself. To the Epicureans, as to everybody else, the distinction between body and mind was an important one, however it was accounted for in terms of their especial creed. But the ground on which the mental is put higher than the corporeal in its capacity for enjoyment or misery is not based on abstruse considerations, but simply on the fact that while the

[1] The *animus* (Lucret. III. 136 seq.) or *mens* is the reason or intellect; it is superior, and seated in the breast: the *anima*, or sentient soul, is dispersed throughout the body. Both are atomic and corporeal.

flesh simply felt in the moment, and for the moment, the mind could be under the combined influence of past, present, and future. The flesh, σάρξ, as Epicurus terms the blind, natural, and unconscious self in us, looks neither before nor after; it pines for nothing, and has no prospects of coming joy. It is buried in itself. The mind, on the contrary, the intelligent self, has a larger range, both in its pleasures and its pains. Yet it might be urged that this consideration tells both ways: the mind can relieve its pain by the prospect of deliverance, and can damp a joy by the reflection on future or contemporaneous pains.

Yet it would be a foolish mistake to suppose that when Epicurus thus advocates the primacy for mind, he is doing more than asserting that the pains and pleasures of the intelligent man have an intensity and vigour exceeding those of the mere boor. He has no idea of pleasures which exclude the body from all share. On this point we have a sentence which his adversaries have quoted and misconstrued to their own delight. "I am unable," he says, "to form any conception of good, from which have been eliminated the pleasures of eating and drinking, the pleasures of sexual love, the pleasures of music and eloquence, and the pleasures of shape and pleasant movements."[1] Of course this does not mean that pleasure merely lies in these things. But it does assert that a pleasure from which they have all been excluded as unreal and

[1] Athenæus, VII. 279; Cicero, *De Fin.*, II. 10, 29.

incompatible, is to Epicurus an impossible and fanciful conception—a mere dream of the idealist. And it is to be looked at in that light, as a protest against a school of ethics which regarded bodily pleasure as something unworthy and degrading, and held that the true and real pleasure was intellectual or mental. It is here that Epicurus is directing his remarks against the idealist philosophers, who made their heaven a life of intellectual vision of truth. Such a one-sided view of human nature as a mere spirit or reason is what Epicureanism constantly and rightly denies. But, as we have seen, it equally on the other hand refuses to acknowledge the supremacy of the mere flesh. It never flinches from the difficult task of emphasizing the complete constitution of human nature —as flesh and spirit.

In the same way we have this double edge of Epicureanism presented in the statement that, "It is impossible to live pleasantly without living wisely, and well, and justly, and it is impossible to live wisely and well, and justly, without living pleasantly."[1] The path of virtue and the path of pleasure coincide. "It is my belief," says Seneca, "however much my fellow-Stoics may disagree with me, that the teaching of Epicurus is holy and right ; pleasure with him is reduced to something small and slender, and the very law which we impose on virtue he lays down for pleasure : he bids it obey nature. And, therefore, I shall not say, like many of the Stoics, that the sect of

[1] Diogenes, x. 140.

Epicurus is a guide to vice; but this I say, it has a bad name, an ill-repute, and that undeservedly. Its countenance gives room for such stories, and suggests wrong expectations. It is like a brave man dressed as a woman."[1] But Epicurus was denied the credit, and even the right, of making this identification between true virtue and true happiness. Words of his were quoted to the effect that "we should honour virtue and goodness and the like, if they produce pleasure, but not otherwise;" or that "he scorned virtue and its foolish admirers when it produced no pleasure."[2] To understand these statements and give them no exaggerated sense, it is well to recollect against whom they are directed. They are no abstract enunciations, but polemical remarks directed against exaggeration on the opposite side. And that exaggeration is found in certain forms of Stoical and Cynical doctrine, which make virtue an end in itself, not merely irrespective of the amount of pleasure it may bring to the individual on a special occasion, but without any consideration of its utility to mankind at large. These enthusiastic friends of virtue have confounded its accidental divergence from pleasure, in the lower sense, when it takes its colour from sensuality, with a divergence from pleasure in its higher sense, when pleasure means the blissful feeling of well-being. The whole character of the dispute reminds us vividly of Bentham's assaults upon the ascetic moralists—as those who "have gone so far as

[1] Seneca, *Dialog.*, VII. 12-13. [2] Athenæus, XII. 546.

to make it a matter of merit and of duty to court pain."[1] Of course, Epicureanism is a great deal more than utilitarianism. It is a theory of life and nature as a whole, and not a mere hypothesis to explain the existence of moral distinctions. Epicureanism is an attempt to afford human souls a guide amid the perplexities of life: it is as much a religion as a scientific theory. Its end is practice, and not mere doctrine. It speaks for the benefit of the individual man as a being for whom life is pregnant with possibilities of pain and pleasure, while utilitarianism is mainly engaged with a speculative problem. Yet, in some ways the drift of Epicureanism would be made clear if it were described as an assertion of the "principle of utility." When Bentham says that "A man may be said to be a partizan of the principle of utility when the approbation or disapprobation he annexes to any action or to any measure is determined by and proportioned to the tendency which he conceives it to have to augment or to diminish the happiness of the community," he at least expresses one side of Epicureanism. But he does not afford equally adequate expression to the personal, practical, and inward aspects. The ethics of the individual, according to Epicurus are not merely and wholly determined by the interests of the community. Man has a right and a law of his own, the right to enjoy existence, and the duty to secure his own full and free development.

[1] "Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation," ch. II. sec. 6.

The rights of society over the individual, the subordination of the individual to the laws and institutions of the State, are in this theory supplementary and derivative.

It is in its remarks on justice and the political virtues that Epicureanism comes nearest to the standpoint of English utilitarianism. "It was not because sovereignty and dominion were intrinsically good that men sought for fame and glory in society, but in order to fence themselves round from their fellowmen."[1] Political life is a *pis aller*, or at any rate the current forms and institutions of political life have only a relative and subsidiary value. The school of political philosophy to which Epicurus Hobbes, Hume, and Rousseau in very different ways belong, insists upon an original compact between the individual members of society as the origin of its establishment. It is probably possible at the present day to acknowledge the amount of truth contained in this doctrine without committing one's self to its absurdities. It is no doubt true that society as it exists upon the face of the earth is largely due to the operation of natural causes, with which purpose or deliberation has exceedingly little to do. The necessities of procuring the means of subsistence, the exigencies of the sexual passion, and the natural force of kindred in the human race, will always and inevitably form societies of differing character and extent. But it is a long way from such animal and

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 140.

natural unions to the mature forms of family and civic life. The operations of instinct only go a small way to explain the rise of domesticity and political associations. The influence of the family instinct, if unaided, seldom goes beyond a narrow circle; and, if the world had to depend on that alone, the race of men would be broken up into an endless number of miniature societies. But other agencies step in to complete the work, and to resist the disintegrating tendencies of selfishness. On one hand tradition—the reverence for what is, the might of the existent to maintain itself,—prevents change, and keeps up old unities. Thus even children's children bow to the supremacy of the family chief. And on another hand the necessities of self-defence and the pressure of war check the separatist forces of individualism.

In what sense, then, it may be asked, are the family and the State due to a contract? Their comparative indissolubility seems to put a great separation between them and other contracts. They are not, as Kant in one instance supposed,[1] mere partial contracts for a special purpose and a special function. Their will and tendency are to claim the whole human being, to demand an undivided and a perpetual allegiance. It is against such a sweeping universal claim that the theory of contract has a certain relative justification. It is thereby declared that the rights of the individual, though for the time they may be put in abeyance, are not wholly annihilated. The rights of

[1] "Rechtslehre," § 24.

the individual are in a sense paramount over those of the community. Such, at least, is the assertion of Epicureanism, and such seems to be the direction in which, even in many modern communistic schemes, the thought of the world is moving. The old Greek theory of an omnipotent State and the Catholic dogma of indissoluble wedlock are set aside. In their stead modern legislation tends more and more to emancipate the members of the family from the bonds of *status ;* and modern politics tend more and more to found Government on a constitutional compact between the rulers and the subjects. Here as in many other places Epicurus is practical, realistic, and modern.

Undoubtedly, neither side of the relationship can be ignored. To sacrifice the interests of the individual bars the way to reform. To put these interests forward in a one-sided way is to banish the very possibility of order and permanence. And, unquestionably, Epicurus was in harmony with the general feeling and opinion of his time. Man the individual, is the only *real* unit of social life : all other unities are so far *ideal* and fictitious, and are due to the combined effort of individual wills. They are entered upon with certain presuppositions ; should they continue, when these presuppositions are no longer fulfilled ? At any rate, when the State and the family cease to be mere natural unions, due solely to the instincts of sex and of self-defence, steadied and perpetuated by the influence of imitation and authority, there must be some sort of understanding or compact,

tacit or formal, in the shape of a common law or customary right, accepted by the members of a community as binding upon them all. Not that such a compact is an arbitrary act, depending entirely on the will either of the majority or of a natural aristocracy. The customary law is an attempt to give expression to the principles which are required in order to make human society possible; to state, so far as individual bias or prejudice on the part of the expositors will allow, the conditions and relations which must be maintained if a society is to flourish and its several members reap the full advantage of its constitution. Such is the profession made by law; unfortunately, law, in its actual shape, represents seldom the relations of the community regarded as an organic whole, but more frequently the relations imposed upon a community from the point of view afforded by the privileged position of some one class or caste of men in the body politic.

The point especially emphasized by Epicurus is, that law was made for man, and not man for law. Law has no intrinsic or abstract claim on the obedience of men except in so far as its precepts and its sanctions have the welfare of humanity for their aim. It is not, in short, because it has been legislatively declared and enacted that a law has obligatory force, but because it is right and expedient. Epicurus is at one with Hume, who says that, "Public utility is the sole origin of justice, and reflections on the beneficial consequences of this virtue are the sole foundation of

its merit.[1]" "Natural justice," says the former,[2] "is a contract of expediency, so as to prevent one man doing harm to another. Those animals which were incapable of forming an agreement to the end that they neither might injure nor be injured are without either justice or injustice. Similarly, those tribes which could not or would not form a covenant to the same end are in a like predicament. There is no such thing as an intrinsic or abstract justice."

So far there is not, perhaps, much practical objection to be taken to the theory. The case seems different when we hear that, "Injustice is not in itself a bad thing: but only in the fear arising from anxiety on the part of the wrong-doer that he will not always escape punishment."[3] This anxiety, according to Epicurus, inasmuch as it never can be annihilated, but always lingers on in an evil conscience, is a sufficient deterrent from criminal actions. If we interpret this doctrine, after the example of some of the ancients, to mean that any wrong-doing would be innocent and good, supposing it escaped detection, we shall probably be misconstruing Epicurus. What he seems to allude to is rather the case of strictly legal enactments, where previously to law the action need not have been particularly moral or immoral: where, in fact, the common agreement has established a rule which is not completely in harmony with "the justice of nature." In short, Epicurus is protesting

[1] *Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, III. 1.

[2] Diogenes Laertius, X. 150.

[3] Ibid., X. 151; Plutarch, *Non posse suav.*, XXV. 33.

against the conception of injustice which makes it consist in disobedience to political and social rules, imposed and enforced by public and authoritative sanctions. He is protesting, in other words, against the claim of the State upon the citizens for their complete obedience; against the old ideas of the divine sanctity and majesty of law as law; against theories like that maintained by contemporaries of Socrates, that there could be no such thing as an unjust law.[1]

The Epicurean accepts the existence of an orderly society as a condition of a satisfactory life, but he does not admit that it has a right to demand his services. "When safety on the side of man has been tolerably secured, it is by quiet and by withdrawing from the multitude that the most complete tranquillity is to be found." "A wise man will not enter upon political life unless something extraordinary should occur." "The free man," says Metrodôrus, "will laugh his free laugh over those who are fain to be reckoned in the list with Lycurgus and Solon."[2] A man ought not to make it his aim to save his country, or to win a crown from them for his abilities. Political life, which in all ages has been impossible for those who had not wealth, and who were unwilling to mix themselves with vile and impure associates, was not to the mind of Epicurus. If he be condemned for this, there are many nobler and deeper natures in the

[1] Cf. Plato, *Crito.*; Xenophon, *Memorab.*, IV. 4.
[2] Plutarch, *Adv. Colot.*, XXXIII. 8.

records of humanity who must be condemned on the same account. But it is hard to see why he should be charged with that as a fault which is the common practice of mankind, and which in a period of despotism, of absolute monarchy, is the course of obvious wisdom. And, above all, it is not the duty of a philosopher to become a political partisan, and spend his life in the atmosphere of avaricious and malignant passions.

For politics, Epicurus substituted friendship. "Of all the things which wisdom procures for the happiness of life as a whole, by far the greatest is the acquisition of friendship." [1] We have already spoken of the friendship of the Epicureans: a characteristic which did not disappear down to the latest times of the sect. But here, too, Epicurus is true to his realistic and non-mystical creed. Friendship is based upon utility mutually enjoyed: only some one must begin the career of service-rendering, just as we must sow the ground in hopes of a future harvest. Or, as Professor Bain puts it [2]:—"The giver should not expect compensation, and should, nevertheless, obtain it." The same realistic tone is apparent in Epicurus's views on sexual love: where he rejects altogether what in modern times has received the somewhat misleading conventional name of Platonic love.[3] Love, as he remarks, and as Cicero approves, is in the strict sense of the term, not accidentally, but essentially different

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 148.

[2] *The Emotions and the Will*, p. 299.

[3] *Tuscul. Disp.*, IV. 70.

from affection or friendship. The former is a passion or instinct. The latter is a rational and reflective relation of one human being to another. It is in friendship, freely formed and imposing no inalienable obligation, no binding impersonal law, that man, according to Epicurus, finds his true home. The only duties which he recognises are those voluntarily accepted on reasonable grounds, and not from natural instincts or through the compulsion of circumstances. The family and the State impose permanent checks and obligations which to him seemed to diminish the independence of man, and to make him a slave of external powers. Thus, the principle of community, rejected in its more stable forms, is accepted in its laxest and most flexible shape, where it is maintained solely by participation in pleasures in common. To leave it to such attraction alone seems to expose the communion of man and man too much to chance: it seems to provide too weak a safeguard against the inconstancy and inequality so characteristic of most human feelings. Yet, on the other hand, to maintain an association when it is only a form or bond, and not the genuine birth of a free spirit, seems to be dangerous and immoral. And perhaps Epicurus is right in holding that the best security of permanence in attachment is given not by imposing a yoke on unwilling or at least varying tempers, but by so unifying all the nature of man that his choices and appetencies will not change from day to day, but maintain a uniform tenor through all varieties of circumstance.

In the ethics of the post-Aristotelian schools the sage or wise man plays a prominent part. In his full perfection he is the property of the Stoics, and represents their ideal of what the perfect man ought to be. The Epicureans, however, seem to have followed their example and drawn up an ideal picture, in which the main features exhibit an intentional contrast to the demands of the opposite sect. The wise man, they said, cannot arise in any race whatever, and must possess a well-ordered constitution, for virtue is not enough without certain natural endowments. Once he has attained that rank, he never loses it: once wise, he is wise for ever. But there are various degrees of wisdom, and not one hard-and-fast line of distinction between wise and unwise. The sage is not inaccessible to feelings: he will feel pain, and will cherish compassion. But though pain affects him, it will not deprive him of his happiness: he will moan when put to torture, but still retain his superiority to fate and circumstance. When his dependents misbehave, he will chastise, yet not as if without pity. All sins are not in his eyes of like magnitude: there are degrees in vice, as in virtue. He will not be over-anxious to figure in the public eye, even in his own special department as a philosophic teacher. Though he set up a school, he will not care to draw crowds of pupils: it will only be by constraint that he will read in public, and he will rather leave what he has to teach, in his writings, than try to proclaim it in places of general resort. He will not be indifferent to secure

for himself a capital for his subsistence, but will keep aloof from commerce, except when in poverty he may be able to earn something by his teaching. The wise man will never fall in love with women, for such love is not heaven-sent. He will neither take a wife nor become the father of a family, except in very special circumstances; nor will he take part in the business of the State, nor seek for fame, except to avoid contempt.

But we need not complete the list of what the sage will or will not do—a list which is full of confusion as it stands, and largely unintelligible. Its last words are :—"He will dogmatize, and not merely raise difficulties. He will be like himself in sleep, and a time may come when he will die for a friend." This incongruous assortment is a specimen of the system and manner with which Diogenes Laertius tells his tale.[1]

We may conclude the remarks on the Ethics of Epicurus by quoting a few of his sayings, mainly taken from Seneca :—

"If you live by nature, you will never be poor: if by opinion, you will never be rich.

"Cheerful poverty is an honourable thing.

"Great wealth is but poverty when matched with the law of nature.

"I said this not to many persons, but only to you: we are a large-enough theatre, one for the other.

"You must be a bondman to philosophy, if you wish to gain true freedom.

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 117-121.

"If any one thinks his own not to be most ample, he may become lord of the whole world, and will yet be wretched.

"We ought to select some good man and keep him ever before our eyes, so that we may, as it were, live under his eye, and do everything in his sight.

"It is an evil to live in necessity, but there is no necessity to live in necessity.

"Among the other ills which attend folly is this: it is always *beginning* to live.

"He enjoys wealth most who needs it least.

"A foolish life is restless and disagreeable: it is wholly engrossed with the future.

"With many the acquisition of riches is not an end to their miseries, but only a change.

"We ought to look round for people to eat and drink with, before we look for something to eat and drink: to feed without a friend is the life of a lion and a wolf.

"Trust me, your words will sound grander in a common bed and a rough coverlet: they will not be merely spoken then, they will be proved true.

"Some people leave life as if they had just entered it.

"It is troublesome to be always commencing life.

"It is absurd to run to death from weariness of life, when your style of life has forced you to run to death. What so absurd as to court death, when you have made your life restless through fear of death?

"Do everything as if Epicurus had his eye upon

you. Retire into yourself chiefly at that time when you are compelled to be in a crowd.

"Learn betimes to die, or if it like thee better, to pass over to the gods.

"The knowledge of sin is the beginning of salvation.

"I never wished to please the people: for what I know, the people does not approve; and what the people approves, that I know not.[1]

"We are born once: twice we cannot be born, and for everlasting we must be non-existent. But thou, who art not master of the morrow, puttest off the right time. Procrastination is the ruin of life for all; and, therefore, each of us is hurried and unprepared at death.

"If thou wilt make a man happy, add not unto his riches, but take away from his desires.[2]

"He who is least in need of the morrow will meet the morrow most pleasantly."[3]

[1] Seneca, *Ep.* 16, 7; 2, 5; 4, 10; 7, 11; 8, 7; 9, 20; 11, 8; 12, 10; 13, 16; 14, 17; 15, 10; 17, 11; 19, 10; 20, 9; 22, 14; 23, 9; 24, 22; 25, 5; 25, 6; 26, 8; 28, 9; 29, 10.

[2] Stobæus, *Florilegium: De Parsimon.*, 28; *De Contint.*, 24.

[3] Plutarch, *De Tranquil. Anim.*, 16.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ATOMIC THEORY.

The theory on which Epicurus based his explanation of the world was a revival of an earlier philosophy. As the Stoics for their theory partly reverted to Heraclitus, so Epicurus to Democritus of Abdêra. They both passed over Aristotle and Plato to seek fresh inspiration in the vigorous thinkers who lived anterior to, or outside of, the influence of Socrates. Democritus was, indeed, a contemporary of Socrates, but his work and character placed him quite on a different level from the Athenian philosopher. Like most of the earlier philosophers, his primary interest was the physical universe. He was a traveller and a man of science, who stood aloof from political life; while Socrates was as true to Athens as Dr. Johnson was to Fleet Street, and cared for no science which had not some bearing on human life.

The main achievement with which the name of Democritus is connected is the atomic theory. The theory and its consequences were afterwards introduced in a popular form into Athens by Protagoras; and the somewhat sceptical applications of it by which that professor made himself notorious were hardly likely to secure favour to the parent doctrine.

There is apparently no reference to it in the authentic writings of Plato. The physical writings of Aristotle, however, are full of criticism and comment on the Democritean theory, to which the Stagyrite is in the main antagonistic. The two thinkers belong to radically different schools. The Athenian idealist school dealt, as it is often scoffingly said, with words and thoughts; the Abderite with things. The former tried to analyze the laws of mind; the latter to explain the origin and constitution of the physical world, the world of external realities. Even when Aristotle does deal with physics, he reduces reality to its logical conception, and not to its mechanical constituents.

The scientific principles of Aristotle were in spirit, if not in form, in contrast with those of modern science. In him the physical view of causality was subordinated to the logical conception of reason and consequence. The cause, according to Aristotle, was the reason why, not the antecedent. His doctrine of the four elements, long predominant in the scientific world, started with a rough popular distinction as the basis of a physical system. In his theory of motion he failed to separate the cause of motion from the body which is moved; and he believed that the body moved must be in mediate or immediate contact with the body moving. He introduced æsthetic considerations into his physical speculations, and inferred that as circular motion is the most perfect and simple, it must be the original movement of the universe. In one word, Aristotle was a teleologist. He held to a unity or plan in nature which deter-

mines the relations of the parts of the universe one to another. Thought, that is, a thinker, a reason, a productive mind, was the fundamental and primary fact. Intelligence or unification presided in the world; isolation or individualization of parts was only due to an act of abstraction, which, while it distinguishes, never absolutely and entirely separates.

According to the opposite or mechanical and materialist theory of the universe, thought is a subjective phenomenon of the human brain, and has no universal connection or significance in the universe of things. As of only human interest, it ought to be ignored in an attempt to understand how things came to be what they are. The idea of a plan, or design of an antecedent idea, must be treated as a piece of anthropomorphism, and abandoned. Such is the tendency of the philosophy of Democritus; with whom there came to the front for the first time a conception which, after much rejection and long neglect, comes to the front again at the present day. The earlier philosophers, Thales (600 B.C.), and his successors, had attempted to explain the variety which at present is found on the earth by supposing it to be the last in the series of metamorphoses of some one primitive body. Their idea of this original matter was concrete and sensuous. They had at first no conception of matter as something inert and inanimate, but believed it to be endued with the spirit or personality which they felt in themselves; and even when they got rid of this vitality or animism, they supposed that the primeval matter had qualitative

differences inherent and inseparable. It was air, or earth, or water; and the result of this form of investigation was to assume the existence of these various modes of matter from the very first, and to argue that they underwent new phases in the course of time. They were in the line which would have tended in the course of long and tedious investigations towards a doctrine of the chemical elements; but it need scarcely be said that ages would have elapsed ere experiments and analysis, the balance and the blowpipe, could have led to such a result.

The current of philosophic thought flowed too rapidly to allow such experimental delays. Speculation leapt forth to anticipate research. The atomic school of Leucippus and Democritus (430 B.C.) advanced a step in the solution of the question, by suggesting a new conception of matter or body, which threw off all the old attributes as secondary or occasional, and went down to primal attributes constituting the nature of body as such. The distinction between the attributes,—called (by Locke and others) primary, and believed to constitute the abstract and eternal essence of matter, and the other attributes, called secondary, and considered to flow from the relations between the primary qualities of body, on the one hand, and the human organism, on the other,—is apparently due to Democritus. Body in itself, as it exists abstracted from any sentient and percipient beings, has only what may be called mathematical qualities. Body is what fills space: is the "full." Apart from it, or wherever there is no such fulness,

there is emptiness. The full and the empty: space filled with something, and empty of something: such are the two principles. But if we ask what that "something" is which fills space, it is not easy for us to guess what answer the Democriteans would have been able to give to this question, which never seems to have occurred to them. Mere extension is hardly enough to distinguish matter from the void, although the school of Descartes in more modern times did put forward extension as the fundamental and distinguishing attribute of corporeal substance, and accordingly denied all vacuum. But the ancient atomists made the existence of a void, of absolute emptiness, as essential a part of their system as the existence of the "full,"—the atoms.

The three qualities which are usually said to distinguish atom from atom are shape, order, and position.[1] To these should, perhaps, be added differences in size and weight. The last-mentioned, indeed, is a disputable point. There are passages from which it seems that Democritus regarded weight as not an attribute of the atoms, but only of the aggregations which they compose.[2] But probably these statements are to be taken in a different sense. They may mean that the atom in all cases, however it may vary in size (and such variations are incalculably great), never reaches a size which can be seen by the bodily eye, and, therefore, inasmuch as the weight varies directly with the size in the case of atoms, the atom is never

[1] Aristotle, *Metaph.*, I. 4.
[2] Plutarch, *Plac. Phil.*, I. 3, 29.

ponderable except when it combines with other atoms to form a body.

The atom, then, is invisible; it never directly comes within the range of our perception. Its differences of size, shape, and position never emerge into the region commanded by the senses. The atom is an intellectual, not a mathematical point. It has magnitude: it is not mere position. But we cannot break it up really into smaller portions (hence its name). It is an utmost limit of disintegration, a sort of absolute diamond, so hard that it is impossible ever to find any cleavage in it. Solidity, impenetrability, invincible resistance to any pressure, impact, or incision, seem to be the essential and primary character of the atom. The atom being indivisible, is also indestructible. All that can ever happen to the atom is either to be brought into conjunction with other atoms,—that is, to a proximity so close that *apparently* the two atoms are united, or to be repelled from some combination in which it was previously found. But the atoms are in themselves imperishable; they have always been and always will be. One aggregation of atoms after another will fall into pieces; fabric after fabric in the visible world, from the vegetables and animals around us, up to the terrestrial mass itself, and the sun and stars, and inward and unseen structures like the soul and mind of man—all these will be dissolved; but the atoms which enter into their composition will remain unchanged, ever new and fresh, ready to form other structures in the ages yet to come.

Such was in its larger outlines the theory of the universe which Epicurus adopted from Democritus, and developed for his own ends. An endless expanse and immeasurable depth of space, an abyss in which there are no bounds, no bottom, no end; and in the vast reaches of this waste of space, an infinitely numerous host of solid, imperishable molecules, too small singly to meet the edge of human vision, ever in motion, and by means of that motion entering upon combinations more or less lasting, but in no instance everlasting,—such is the universe which presented itself to the intelligence of an Epicurean.

There are one or two points on which Epicurus is said to have differed from Democritus. One is apparently to be found in the primal movement of the atoms. Democritus assumed that when once these atoms were put in motion, they would form vortices and revolve. He arrived at this conclusion, it seems, by the consideration that the heavier atom would overtake the higher, and then, perhaps, was decided by dynamical considerations to assume the rise of circular movements. But at any rate Epicurus, as we have seen, professed to keep more exactly to the facts of common experience by rejecting all circular motion, and generalizing the data afforded by the fall of unsupported bodies; whilst as an auxiliary principle, he had recourse to that spontaneous swerving which he believed to be a fact of common experience in the case of our own selves. In another point, Epicurus, as represented by

Lucretius, seems to go further than Democritus. The atoms or molecules, though not susceptible of physical separation or discerption, are still composed of parts which can at least be distinguished from each other. The atom is logically divisible; for as it differs in the shape of each example, it must consist of not less than three parts—parts, however, which are only mathematically distinguishable by their different position or order in the total which they constitute.[1] Between such ideal constituents of the atom there is no intervening void. They are completely in contact with one another, and no force can ever succeed in wrenching them apart. And thus, for all the purposes of mechanical cosmogony, the complex molecules, formed by the union of these simple parts, may be treated as themselves simple and elementary.

The scientific principles or axioms of Democritus were also adopted by Epicurus.[2] The maxim *ex nihilo nihil fit* (out of nothing nothing can come) stands foremost. Creation and annihilation are equally and for the same reasons impossible. All alteration and change is only combination or severance of parts. There must be as much in the cause as in the effect, the antecedents must contain all that is found in the consequent. On this principle, be it observed, the material cause is all-important. The eternity and indestructibility of matter is the point

[1] Lucretius, II. 485.

[2] Cf. Lange's *History of Materialism*, vol. I. (English translation).

solely emphasized. The formal cause is comparatively slighted. For if we look at the matter from another point of view, and consider not the constituents, but the order or plan into which they enter, we may rather say that at every moment and with every change, we have an instance of creation and of annihilation. Every step in organization, every stage of growth, shows something new brought into existence where previously there was nothing. The life in the rose, for instance, can be traced back to nothing in the chemical elements out of which it is elaborated in the workshop of nature. The world on its ideal side is continual emergence from nothing, and disappearance into nothing. It is on its material aspects only that the dictum of the atomists is fairly and fully applicable. The dictum in other words expresses an abstraction of truth. Its value lies in its accentuation of the principle of causality as the foundation of all scientific truth. Its limitation lies in the neglect of the law, that in every effect there is a something which was not in the cause; something in the conclusion which was not in the premises; otherwise progress, change, growth are impossible.

A second principle, not very different in meaning, is that nothing occurs by chance, but all by reason and necessity. That is to say, the reign of law is absolute; all interference with the regular chain of causation is excluded. A third principle is more specially confined to the Atomic school. If motion is to be possible, so it is declared, there must be a

void; if the universe were literally full, there would be a complete block, and all would be stationary. Change, in short, means locomotion or displacement of the particles of matter. And, fourthly, everything existent is nothing but atoms in space. Everything else supposed to exist is but fancy or opinion,—the human or subjective aspect of things as contradistinguished from their truth or reality—superficial illusions due to the peculiar perspective under which we as percipient and conscious beings are accustomed to look at the world.

The atomic theory has had many hard things said of it. It has been styled a conception which destroys the beauty and grandeur of the universe, which substitutes mere chances for a cosmical plan, and mechanism for organic life; and, in the face of Lord Bacon's protest,[1] that that school which is most accused of atheism doth most demonstrate religion, atomism has been assumed to find its inevitable issue in atheism. These charges, though far from groundless, are largely due to a misunderstanding; they express what is largely a grievance of the sentiments and the higher emotions, and underestimate the necessities of scientific explanation. All science in its abstract processes of investigation must take up a position at times antagonistic to the poetic and religious tendencies of our nature. The analyst must break up the unity into its ingredients, split the whole into its fractions. The first condition of

[1] *Essays*, XVI. "Of Atheism."

the possibility of perfect knowledge is to be for the time content to accept imperfect and piecemeal acquaintance in special spheres. Before we can have science, we must allow the several sciences to enclose themselves in the limited range of their own departments. The whole must be for the time put aside; the general meaning or drift of existence must be ignored. In other words, the sciences know nothing of ideals; they are without God, because He is neither a part nor to be found in any part, but is all and in all. The man of science, as it were, steps into the place of God. He takes the shapeless matter of the world, and by the might of his intelligence creates its various forms,—at least, in words.

Atomism carries beyond the range of direct observation a condition of things which is suggested by many phenomena within that range. It holds that the apparent continuity of the smallest piece of matter visible to the naked eye, or to the eye armed with optical instruments, is not real. The apparent continuity is a real discreteness; what seemed one uninterrupted total is declared to be an aggregation of minute particles, no two of which are absolutely in contact. Numerous phenomena point in this direction. Every child is familiar with the illusion by which the blazing torch swung rapidly round produces a continuous ring of fire. The knife penetrates between the particles of the apple. What appears a level plain to the naked eye becomes under the microscope a succession of hills and valleys. The telescope sometimes resolves the nebula into a number of

single stars. The phenomena of light and heat, as well as some chemical transformations, tend to suggest the Atomic hypothesis as the simplest assumption for their explanation.[1] In one word, the atomic theory is in complete accordance with the same characteristic of our intellect which finds its clearest expression in number. The atomist regards every existing real substance as a sum, collective or aggregate of a certain number of units. The differences in the quantity, value, purpose, &c., of these aggregates are reduced in this way to mere quantitative differences in the number, arrangement, or combination of these units in a given extent of space. The contrast between a solid and a fluid, or a gas, would be explained in this manner to be a merely gradual distinction.

There are, however, two points to be noticed when we compare the atomic theory of Epicurus with that of modern times. In the first place, the ancient atomism was mainly a hypothesis, invented to afford a simple explanation of phenomena. It rested, so far as we know, on slight experimental basis. Modern atomism, on the contrary, is supported by a large amount of experimental evidence; it is a conclusion forced upon us by exact weighing and measurement. But a second difference is even more striking. When we ask for the character of the primeval units, the ancient and modern theories part company. Epicurus gives us a picturesque scene in

[1] Fechner, *Ueber die Physikalische und Philosophische Atomenlehre*; cf. Lotze, *Metaphysik*, p. 364.

his atomic hosts. Applying his mental telescope, we see accumulations of small bodies, of every variety of shape, catching hold of each other's hooks and corners, or rebounding from their rounded sides. Geometrical solids touching each other in their course and forming geometrical aggregations, this is the kind of atomism in vogue with Epicurus. Newton, in the close of his Optics, suggests a somewhat similar conception of the world. It seemed probable to him that "God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable particles, . . . of several sizes and figures, and several proportions to space, and perhaps of different densities and forces."[1] But in Newton's idea, we see a new property of the atoms emphasized, that of force. The atom has not merely geometrical aspects; it is treated as dynamical also. In the modern theories of molecules and vortex-rings we have an advance in the equipment of the ultimate elements. No longer do they, almost devoid of properties themselves, generate the complex variety of properties in the actual world. The modern molecule is a highly-organised body; it possesses in miniature the powers of spontaneity and movement which are operative in the larger macrocosm, it is perpetually vibrating, with an endless capacity of changing its form. No longer a hard, dead thing, it may be almost described as instinct with life. It is, moreover, subjected to measurement. Instead of mere generalities about the infinitesimal size of atoms, we find the

[1] Monro's Lucretius. Notes on Book I. 550.

speculative physicist examining the thickness of a soap-bubble, with a view to determine the mass of a gaseous molecule, telling us, approximately, that two million molecules of hydrogen in a row would extend for a millimètre (less than $\frac{1}{25}$ of an inch), and even fixing the rate at which such a particle vibrates. Considerations like these would not have been to the mind of Epicurus: they would have savoured of useless curiosity. And even apart from this, it may be said that whatever be their justification and their use for mechanical and chemical science, or even, as in the cellular hypothesis, for physiology, they do not, for philosophical importance, rank on a level with the somewhat crude doctrines of Democritus. As suggesting a more organic view of the constitution of nature than the old atomists held, they deserve all recognition. But the praise bestowed upon the old doctrine for the simplicity of its elements cannot be assigned to them.

The real advance of modern atomism, as seen in the speculations of Kant or of Boscovich, is in the substitution of forces for hard points. Matter is looked upon as constituted by centres of forces, in a complex set of relations, dependent one upon another, and yet resisting each other's influence. The appearance of extension and solidity is pronounced to rest upon the reciprocal attractions and repulsions of these active centres. But, after all, when forces have been substituted for extended atoms, the ultimate difficulty still remains. Why are these forces so located, and these atoms so arranged in the world? And the only

possible answer to this question, other than a re-assertion that such is the given fact, is to refer to an underlying power which divides its energies in these diverse seats of force, and creates the show of a series of molecules in reciprocal relations throughout the universe.

It was something like this that was the drift of the Monadology of Leibnitz. The pond, he says, which looks a mere mass of water, is really teeming with myriads of live fish ; every portion of matter is like a garden luxuriant in vegetation. If we could only see deep enough we should see endless life, and life within life, throughout the universe. The ultimate realities of the world are monads. These are not mere dead matter, but endowed with vital forces, even with the beginnings of consciousness. Every monad is complete in itself, and lets nothing enter from without; it has a principle in itself which controls the series of its changes. There is within it, as it were, a spring, which has been wound up in the beginning, and now goes on unwinding itself in an endless chain of phenomena, without interruption from forces external. But although not in any way dependent upon each other, the monads are essentially parts of a great plan or pre-established harmony. Each of them is a meeting-point to which converge relations from every point in the universe ; not merely is it a self-contained unit and law of its own movement, but also from its own special point of view, a mirror, in which the whole universe is ideally

contained, reflected as in a picture. Each monad is thus in a way the whole world.[1]

Thus in the Monadology of Leibnitz we find an attempt, based upon the conception of a divine plan, to combine the fullest recognition of the individuality of the elements in the universe with that peculiar universality which they possess as so many little worlds, whose limitation consists, not in the extent of their contents, but in the comparative disorder and displacement of their reflective or appreciative power due to what we may term the parallax of their position. Such a theory is the very opposite of that of Epicurus. According to him there was no creator who planned the order of the primary elements, and overruled from the beginning their whole subsequent career. The connections of one atom with another are wholly external: impact and mechanical adhesion connect bodies which have no congenital affinities one to another. The monads are immaterial: and materiality is only an appearance due to the conditions of human nature. The atoms, on the other hand, are essentially material: they are not indeed visible, but the essential qualities of visible matter are what they would exhibit if we could see them. All the difference between them lies in their variety of size, weight, and shape: a variety, however, which though incalculable, is not infinite.

[1] Leibnitii, *Opera:* ed. Erdmann, p. 715 (*Monadologie*) and *passim*.

With these simple elements Epicurus proceeded to give an account of the various provinces of nature. It would be tedious to follow him in detail into these explanations. And it is also to a large extent unnecessary, from the circumstances of the case. For the physical system of Epicurus falls into two parts. There is, first, a general or metaphysical part, containing the principles and fundamental articles. The general terms of his doctrine are dogmatic : they are matters of principle, and not mere statements of observation. Some of these have already been referred to, such as the indestructibility of matter, the absence of chance or of teleology from a scientific explanation of the universe. Another, and it is one which is maintained by the Stoics no less manifestly than by the Epicureans, is that existence,—by which is to be understood activity and passivity, the capacity of acting or being acted upon,—is body, of corporeal nature. The incorporeal and the non-existent are only two names for the same thing. Spirit, mind, or soul, if they are supposed to mean anything immaterial, are rejected from the world as understood by the Epicureans. All that happens is only transference of matter from one place to another.

In its attempt to carry out these principles Epicureanism naturally found great difficulties—difficulties increased by the imperfect state of many of the sciences at the time. Its theory of perception, though not without elements of truth, was lamentably marred from the want of any knowledge of the mechanism of vision, the laws regulating the dispersion of light,

and the structure of the nervous tissues by which the impression from a luminous body is conveyed to the brain. But these investigations, although they might have altered for the better the details of the explanation, could never have got over its original defects, as an attempt to render plain the genesis of life, sensation, and thought.

Of course, it is easy on this point to do injustice to Epicurus. No theory whatever can explain the relation between what are looked upon as two distinct species of substances or phenomena, between one thing called mind and another called matter. We can, indeed, employ a number of phrases to convey some views on this question. We can say that mind and matter are the same substratum exhibiting different phenomena : that sensation is another aspect of the same fact which in one aspect is called motion : that thought is a function of organized matter, and so on. But, after all, such verbal tricks throw little real light upon the question. Epicurus is so far on safer ground when he asserts that whatever acts or suffers action has one general characteristic, viz., that it is bodily. But he fails to give due importance to the point implied in this affirmation. His own language, even, would lead us to the doctrine that the essential characteristic of body is the exhibition of energy. Force, be it only of impact or of resistance, is evidently the generic and primary quality of what we describe as body—as the atom. As for the geometrical qualities (shape, extension, position) on which the atomic theory of Epicurus lays most

weight, they are only of secondary importance as indices or visible representatives of the degree and amount and relation of the primary factor of force. This point, though not ignored in the atomic theory of the ancients, is not fully taken into account, or submitted to analysis. Nor is this peculiar to Epicurus. Plato similarly emphasizes "form" in his ideal theory. Geometry, not dynamical physics, is his model. They fail to note that force, function, or energy is the real significance of what by the senses of sight and touch is construed as extension. As that only exists which is active, the real meaning of existence is, as Aristotle said, activity (ἐνέργεια). Body makes its presence manifest by its activity. Hence, although we may accept the dictum of Epicurus that all activity is connected with a corporeal substratum, or is sensibly manifested (*i.e.* to the eye) as extension and figure, still it is wrong to attribute all importance to the second aspect, and deny it to the first. And this is precisely what Epicureanism does.

And when Epicurus teaches the corporeality of mind and soul, he falls into similar errors. He cannot recognise existence under any other shape save that of extended matter. Mind, therefore, and soul, which he, like the multitude, believes to exist, are reduced by him to the level of extended and material substance. They are made, it is true, of peculiar and more delicate particles, a mixture of special elements, as Epicurus holds, following a line of argument which seems more kindred to the speculations of Empedocles than of Democritus. In this point,

then, Democritus is at variance with modern ideas, even in the materialist school. To them mind is not an extended substance, but, at the least, a function of extended substance. It is not a thing, but an act, or, as some of them might say, a permanent possibility of action. They may believe that thought and consciousness are a function of the brain : they do not identify the brain with the mind. Epicurus here, as elsewhere, is on the level of popular thought, which takes the soul to be a "thing" among other things, forgetting that even in things the main point may not be their capacity of filling space.

The refusal to recognise the existence of anything beside corporeal substances led Epicurus to some puzzling questions about the existence of attributes : the *conjuncta* and *eventa* of Lucretius.[1] The former are the permanent and essential qualities, the "everlasting concomitants without which body cannot be thought" as they are described by Epicurus himself : the latter are the occurrences or phenomena by which bodies manifest their action at special times. Grammatically the *conjuncta* are represented by adjectives ; the *eventa* by verbs. These, says Epicurus, are distinguishable as aspects, but they never exist separately from the totality or aggregate which we know as body. But this, though perfectly true, scarcely gets over the obscurity of their position,—as it were half-way between existence in the full sense and non-existence. It is only part of the general infirmity which sinks

[1] Lucretius, I. 449-482.

the intelligible to the level of the sensible: which regards the location of an act as the main point about it. In regard to time, a similar question arises. Space, of course, has been assumed as the condition of visibility, under the somewhat condensed form of the vacuum; but time is still left. Upon that topic Epicurus remarks, like Kant, that time is not a conception, and so we cannot get an idea of it by examining our preconception, nor can it be made clearer to us by substituting for it any phrase or definition. Time, in short, he says, being an intuition, is only to be understood as a generalization of our consciousness, when we feel time to pass slowly or quickly. It is the generalization of what we mean when we distinguish days and nights, and hours.[1] But he makes no attempt to see what is implied in the power of making such distinctions. We feel it: that is enough.

Here Epicurus is at his weakest: metaphysics was evidently not his forte. Yet in his indication of the subjectivity of time, as part of our way of looking at things, or as a condition of sensation, he seems to be on the right route. And generally, we may say, that Epicureanism taught in this whole matter a relative truth. It rightly lays down that the laws which regulate the movement of masses in the visible sphere of mechanics are equally operative in the regions subject to physiology. The process of vision may be explained by the same principles and methods which

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 72; Sext. Empir., *Adv. Math.*, x. 219.

are used in accounting for the phases and revolutions of the planetary system. There are no special provinces in nature living under privileged constitutions, and exempted from the operation of the uniformities of causation elsewhere prevalent. The realm of physical investigation has no limits *in rerum natura*. Mechanical theories, adopting atomic or molecular hypotheses if necessary, are as competent in dealing with the human organization as in dealing with the constitution of a block of marble. But when this has been admitted, the whole truth has not been put forward. The phenomena of conscious life are not explained when their mechanical aspects have been analyzed. Scientific theories transgress their bounds when they attempt to explain the genesis of mind or soul: they transgress still more, when, like Epicureanism, they dogmatically assert the conditions for the annihilation of soul.

In the view of physical science, intelligence or spirit is eliminated from the universe. The world is reduced to a series of parcels of matter, deprived of life and consciousness, and regarded solely as transmitting motion from one to another. Matter, indeed, is either combined with force, or supposed to be identical with force; but in either case force is ultimately reducible to motion. All the various forces in the universe are exhibited in various complicated and disguised forms of movement. This doctrine, to which modern science is led by its mathematical methods, is the fundamental proposition of Epicureanism.

And in movement there seems nothing mystical or beyond the most vulgar apprehension. It is apparently a fact presented again and again in daily experience. If Epicurus had heard of the paradoxes of Zeno the Eleatic, about the reality or conceivability of motion, he probably looked upon them as frivolous quibbling about a point for which the evidence of sense was undoubted. To conceive the whole world as an immense commentary illustrating the text that atoms and void are everywhere, is an easy task for the imagination. It banishes occult properties, metaphysical entities, and fantastic spirits from the universe.

Atoms in the void, moving freely about like the motes we see in the sunbeam, are continually waving their mazy dance throughout the endless spaces, and gathering into aggregations of a moderate degree of persistence. A variety of worlds, of various shapes, sizes, and contents, arises here and there, separated from each other by spaces of comparative emptiness. But the worlds thus created by the movement of atoms at length disintegrate through similar causes. It seems as if Epicurus, following the lead of the Sicilian philosopher, Empedocles, had supposed that there was an age in which the powers of union were supreme, and an age in which the spirit of discord waxed most powerful. And as these changes take place the aspect of things varies in detail, though its general features remain unchanged. As in the whole, so with the particular world of earth, sun, and stars, to which we belong. It, too, has its time of genera-

tion and birth ; it will, also, have its old age, and, as the matron whose days of child-bearing are over, will yield its fruit no more.[1]

[1] Lucretius, v. 821-836.

CHAPTER IX.

COSMOLOGY AND THEOLOGY.

The cosmology of Epicurus may receive some light if we contrast with it the cosmology of Aristotle. With Aristotle the earth, and all that lies beneath the circle of the moon—the special region of humanity—is an inferior province of the universe. The home of the highest reason is beyond the sublunary sphere. The earth lies in the centre of the universe. A series of circles, each less perfect than the other, extends from the first, or starry heaven, towards the earth. The heavenly element of æther is on a different level from the ordinary material of the four terrestrial elements. Things are intrinsically light or intrinsically heavy; some of them tend towards the centre of the sphere, whilst others tend upwards towards the circumference. There is only a single world, or universe: there is a limited and rounded totality of things. While the æther on the circumference is naturally endowed with a circular motion, the other elements move in straight lines up and down. The order and disposition of the world are eternal: it has had no beginning, and will have no end. There is no empty space in the universe. The starry sphere is in immediate contact with the godhead. Indeed,

all the celestial spheres are regarded as beings endowed with life, and capable of intelligent action. But especially is the ethereal sphere the home of superior intelligence, which, in serene ease and blessedness, circles for ever in its own most perfect motion.

Nothing can be in greater contrast with these Aristotelian ideas than the system of Epicureanism. Instead of a central system we have an endless number of cosmical bodies, no one of which is nearer the centre than another. The earth is no longer an absolute middle-point, around which the starry world revolves. The starry sphere itself is made of a matter not of transcendent quality, but of the same constitution as our earth. The world is no longer an intelligent and vital being, but a mere product of mechanical unions, coherent only for awhile, but destined to disruption. All matter is heavy, all tends downwards. And thus Epicurus set aside the pictorially-complete conception of Aristotle for a new idea, in which the earth and its starry and planetary attendants, as well as sun and moon, sink into a mere unit in the endless series of worlds. But as he did so, he diminished the grandeur of the sun and stars; he made them mere dependents and satellites of the earth, and so took up an astronomical theory which is even more fanciful and absurd than that of the Stagirite. For when a modern speaks of other worlds than this earth of ours, he thinks in the first instance of the other planets belonging to the solar system: and if he goes further, his imagination is carried on to the distant

stars, each, perhaps, attended with their planets, and these with their several satellites. But such an idea is quite unlike that held by Epicurus. The planets and stars are parts of this world in which we live, and not very important or extensive parts of it either.[1]

The ancients are never tired of expressing their surprise and contempt for the astronomical doctrines of Epicureanism. At first sight, indeed, it excites unmitigated wonder that Epicurus, living in a generation after Eudoxus, and not long preceding the two great astronomers, Aristarchus of Samos, and Hipparchus of Nicæa, should propound the doctrine that the sun and the stars are of the same magnitude as they appear to be, or, at any rate, only differ inappreciably from their apparent size. Nor did the Epicureans fail to argue from the facts of daily observation in favour of this doctrine, alleging that distance makes little or no difference in the size of terrestrial flames so long as their light remains at all visible. "Had the size been diminished to the eye of the distance, much more would the colour have been altered." So says Epicurus in the 11th book of his work of Nature; but the fragments of that book restored from Herculaneum help us little. All that we can see is, that Epicurus, distrusting all lengthy argument from various facts, supplemented and defined by the help of mathematics, adheres solely to argumentation based on the immediate data of obser-

[1] Aristotle, *Metaph.*, XII. 8; *Physic.*, VIII. 9; *De Cœlo*, I. 2.

vation. The reasoning by which Aristarchus attempted to answer these problems in his book on the magnitudes and distances of the sun and moon, was of a recondite, mathematical character; while the speculations of Eudoxus on the same topic (he believed the diameter of the sun to be nine times greater than that of the moon) were complicated by the introduction of celestial spheres.[1]

This indifference to astronomical science is evident in other points. It cost no trouble to the Epicureans to suggest the idea that the sun and moon are born afresh every morning and every evening: that at fixed times the germs of fire which gather in them come together, and again at fixed times are dispersed. When we suppose that they are merely out of sight it may be that they are really out of existence, and a new sun perchance is created every morning, and a new moon arises every month to go through its phases in the accustomed order.

Such is one instance of the general method and principle of the Epicurean theory of the celestial movements and meteorological phenomena. Both of these Epicurus believed beyond the reach of observation. We can never hope, he said, to know the real mechanism of the planetary and astral phenomena, or the secret causes of the hail or the dew. We know not the ordinances of heaven; we have not entered into the treasures of the snow, nor can we bind the sweet influences of Pleiades. These matters are

[1] Renouvier, *Manuel de Philosophie Ancienne* (Paris, 1844), tome II.

beyond the ken of man : we cannot attain certainty on such topics, and those who profess to have attained it are charlatans, anxious to impose upon the vulgar. The ordinary terrestrial phenomena where we can trace the connection of causes and effects have, it is true, one fixed and settled reason to be given for them, and no more. But such simplicity cannot be looked for in the heavens, and there we must be content to accept a number of solutions or explanations as, in our state of ignorance, equally probable.

It would be wrong to suppose from this that Epicurus regarded astronomical and meteorological phenomena as merely casual, governed by no laws, and exhibiting no regularity. His attitude is rather that of one who distrusts the capacities of science, and is especially suspicious of results won by the help of mathematical processes which are inaccessible to the multitude. The fundamental principles of scientific inquiry he accepts, but he cannot follow the intricate methods by which science establishes its results. Let us remember that his main end is a practical one, to free men's minds from the superstitious terrors connected, for example, with eclipses or with thunder. For that purpose any explanation which is in accordance with observed facts, and not controverted by accepted laws of nature, is sufficient. Probability is all that we can look for here, and it is all that we need.[1] Each phenomenon is, as it were,

[1] Butler, in his 15th Sermon ("Upon the Ignorance of Man"), takes up an analogous position.

taken isolated from the others, and considered on its own account. So long as we maintain this position, obviously several explanations may seem equally probable, and to adopt any one of them absolutely, to the rejection of all the others, would seem an unjustifiable proceeding, an instance of mythologizing, as Epicurus would say, instead of physiologizing. But it is the mistake of Epicurus to stop short at this point. It is only by an act of abstraction that we have thus dissevered one phenomenon from its connections. Each forms a unity with others, and cannot strictly be explained without taking them into account. The more circumstances we take into account, the more our room for a variety of hypothetical explanations is narrowed. At last, when the whole of the correlated phenomena are embraced within our view, no more than a single explanation is possible.

Epicurus, therefore, was wrong, but we may still say something in his defence. To have waited for an exhaustive and connected study of the phenomena in question would have been to postpone the solution indefinitely. Even in astronomy, the current explanation of planetary movements in Epicurus's day was a mistake, and to assert it as a certain truth, as the explanation of the facts, was presumption. The worth of Epicureanism lies in its maintenance, even where direct proof is out of reach, of the faith that the phenomena of the universe are governed by the same laws as have become familiar to us in humbler spheres. We may not be able actually to assign

a certain and verified reason for a particular phenomenon, but we are at least in no doubt that the causes at work are perfectly natural and commonplace, and, in illustration of this conviction, we can assign various means by which the phenomenon in question might plausibly have been produced. "Only," says Epicurus, "let us have no mythological explanation." And he speaks disapprovingly of "those who have adopted an impracticable method, and lost themselves in baseless theories, by supposing the phenomena to take place in one method only, and rejecting all the others which might have been admissible." "They have entered on a realm of inconceivables, and have been incapable of noting the visible phenomena which give the key to the celestial mysteries." "They contend with facts, and mistake the limits of human knowledge."[1]

It is obvious, therefore, that Epicurus has mainly in view the theories of the heavenly movements held by Aristotle and Eudoxus. These are "the slavish artifices of the astronomers" to which he refers; they are "the devotees of a vain astronomy." It is not the astrology of the sorcerers which he condemns, but that of the theoretical astronomers, with its cycles and epicycles, its complex machinery for facilitating the evolutions of the orbs of heaven, its fantastic ideas of a peculiar virtue in the starry globes, its attachment of divinities to the extreme circles of the

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 84—94.

cosmos.[1] As against this gorgeous hypothetical construction, which extended itself further and further in order to provide an adequate explanation of every new phenomenon, Epicureanism raises the protest that a true theory must base itself upon facts, that the only facts obtainable are the familiar phenomena of common life, and that there is no hierarchy in the cosmical arrangements by which the stars and planets should have a movement and laws peculiar to themselves. A hypothesis, he says, must not assume unknown and unfamiliar principles for the unknown; it must be based upon, and accord with, the familiar. Here, as elsewhere, Epicurus insists upon the unity in principle and methods which pervades the world, and rather neglects, as unimportant, any difference in the various grades of organization.

It seems to some extent strange that Epicurus should thus attack Aristotelianism and cognate theories for the very fault Aristotle had found in Plato. According to Aristotle, the theory of Plato assigns to the soul of the world a fate like that of Ixion on the wheel—an existence without leisure and reasonable ease, maintaining without any slumber the forcible movement of the sphere.[2] He contrasts with this the tranquil and blessed life of his heaven, which, possessing by nature a circular revolution of its own, needs no violence or effort to maintain its career, but glides on tranquilly like an immortal god, free

[1] Whewell, *History of the Inductive Sciences*, vol. I., p. 170, sec. 9.

[2] Aristotle, *De Cœlo*, II. 1; Plato, *Timæus*.

from care and labour. In such a conception of the heaven, indeed, the introduction of a God seems superfluous: he enjoys perfect blessedness and repose, has no work or care to trouble him. He neither creates nor acts: his life is pure self-consciousness. Himself unmoved, he moves the world, not by exerting any activity, but by the attractive power in him, by which the inferior is constantly drawn under the sway of the supremely perfect. Thus, for each particular movement we are obliged to discover a special cause. God, in the Aristotelian scheme, because He is the cause of everything in general, is the cause of nothing in particular. His dwelling is on the very limits of the world, beyond the sphere of our dull earth.

In all this we are already far on the way to the theology of Epicurus. Careless opponents have described Epicurus as an Atheist. But the existence of the Gods is what he never denies: what he, on the contrary, asserts as a fundamental truth. The question on which he diverges from popular faith is not whether there are Gods, but what is their nature and their relation to man. His special tenet is a denial of the creative and providential functions of deity. The Gods are away from the turmoil and trouble of the world. Going a step beyond Aristotle, he assigns them an abode in the vacant spaces between the worlds. It is a place of calm, where gusty winds, and dank clouds and mists, and wintry snow and frost never come. Its smiling landscapes are bathed in perpetual summer-light. There the bounties of nature

know no end, and no troubles mar the serenity of the mind.[1] Such was the Epicurean heaven: there was no Epicurean hell.

The Gods themselves were of human shape; not globes of rolling matter, nor immaterial forms sharing in endless motion. For what higher form can human imagination conceive than the human form? Surely, this is of a higher beauty than the shapes of brutes or of mathematical figures. It is only with the human form that in our experience is reason conjoined; and therefore if we are to argue from the known to the unknown, like unto men must be the shape of the Gods. And so in all respects, from the highest form of life and intelligence with which we are acquainted upon earth, we argue to the higher nature of the Gods. But according to Epicurean theory, disembodied spirit is an impossibility: body and soul are in the living being indissolubly united, and their separation means for both death. Hence the Gods have a body, but it is not as our body; and they have blood in their veins, but it is different from human blood.[2]

In all this, if we remember the fundamental postulate of Epicureanism, forbidding us to regard the soul as more independent of the body than the body is of the soul, we see a process common in some degree to all theology. A God out of all relation or similarity to man would be for man unintelligible. In God he believes he will find all that is best and highest in

[1] Lucretius, III. 18–24.

[2] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* I. 18 (46).

himself. If he regards his body as an imperfection, he will naturally dwell on the spirituality of Godhead. If, like Epicurus, he hold the body no less sacred than the spirit, he will imagine his God endowed with an ethereal body. He may, like some at least of the followers of Epicurus, go a step further. Regarding the Greek as pre-eminent in culture over all barbarian races, he will believe that his Gods in their quiet dwellings and unclouded sky, as they eat their angelic food and quaff their purer liquids, converse with each other in the tongue of Plato and Demosthenes.[1]

But it is only with the eye of reason that these blessed abodes and their inhabitants can be discerned. Their nature is not gross enough to affect the organs of the sense; far away and delicately fine, they escape the tests of the eye and the touch; they are barely apprehended by the intelligence of the soul. It is the rational soul, not the senses, by which we are brought into relation with them. The finer particles of the reasonable spirit are in some degree suited to the impalpable structure of the divine nature: like meets and apprehends like. It is especially in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls upon men, that the soul unsolicited by the impressions of the senses, responds sensitively to the images of divine beings ever permeating the worlds. A belief in the existence of the Gods arose, says Lucretius, because in their waking hours, but still more in sleep,

[1] *Voll. Herculan.*, Coll. Pr., VI. 73–77 (Coll. 13 and 14), from Philodemus, in pap. 152, Oxon.; cf. Metrodôrus *de Sensionibus*, in the same vol., Col. X. pp. 19–21 and 35.

men saw forms of excellent beauty, which seemed without burden to themselves to move, and speak, and act, and were of grander aspect than humanity.[1] These forms were one kind of *idola* or *spectra*.[2] According to the Epicurean theory of perception, vision is a species of tactile sensation. From all the solid bodies around us there are constantly streaming in uninterrupted flow images, consisting of minute particles, which repeat exactly the shape of the body from which they spring. But from the divine bodies which, as of finer texture, are located in a region beyond the spheres of grosser materiality known as worlds—there are also streaming effluxes of more delicate constitution, which appeal only to the reasonable soul. These images as they pass from the Gods to men are not distinguished one from another, like the solid objects which we number and separate from one another. Endless in their numbers, and indistinguishable in their outlines, the mind does not gather from them any idea of a definite number of individualized beings. One does not stand solid and impenetrable to the others; on the contrary, they pass indistinguishably into each other in virtue of their general similarity. Accordingly, the Gods we perceive are not distinct individual figures, like the deities of the old Olympus. Less substantial and sculpturesque in their outlines, they have a generic character of deity about them. But the main result

[1] Lucretius, v. 1161–1194.
[2] Cicero, *Epist. ad Fam.* xv. 16.

of this character of our perceptions of the divine, is that the Gods as they want the individuality of solid material objects, gain in exchange permanence and everlastingness. Their forms never cease, and we do not distinguish individual from individual.[1] Hence, in the ceaseless succession of images of this sublimated matter, alike and interchangeable, there grows up an idea that they are eternal. If there be, according to Epicureanism, a balance between the two halves of nature, so that a preponderance of the transient here should be compensated by a preponderance of the immortal there, then we may infer from this equality of distribution here and there that the Gods must be immortal. But it is extremely doubtful if any such idea of compensation by excess here for defect there was an accepted dogma of the Epicurean school. It is sufficient to say that the immortality of the Gods was the natural conclusion drawn from the character of the images by means of which their existence was made known to the intelligence of man.

Of the conception of the godhead, then, deathlessness, a superiority to the general law of nature, was a characteristic. It would be easy to ask, with Tennyson—

> "If all be atoms, how then should the gods,
> Being atomic, not be dissoluble,
> Nor follow the great law?"

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[1] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I. 49, 105-109; Diogenes Laertius, X. 139; cf. Schömann, *Opuscula*, vol. IV., p. 336 (*De Epicuri Theologia*).

But it is less easy to answer the question. One may say, indeed, that the matter concerns not the Gods so much as our notions of the Gods; and that this, by the circumstances of the transmission, forces us to regard them as eternal. Not less does our idea of deity involve the blessedness of God. These two attributes, indeed—of eternal existence and of perfect happiness—are, according to Epicurus, the two fundamental elements which, in all ages and nations, constitute the true idea of godhead—an idea which is as widespread as the human race.

But if these two attributes are maintained as the anticipation or preconception of God, then much that is commonly attributed to the Gods must be rejected. The godhead, indeed, is still worthy of all worship; its excellence and glory are properly met by the reverence and joyous regard of mankind. But prayers and vows are out of place towards such a being. He is neither weak enough to be biased by human offers, nor is he malicious enough to seek to injure man. He stands aloof from the world, from the denser play of matters affecting the senses. The Gods live for themselves, and have no care for man. Man, on the other hand, need have no fear of the Gods. They are powerless equally for hurt or help. Any worship rendered to them is inspired neither by hopes nor fears, but simply by the outgoing of the spirit towards auguster beings enjoying superhuman blessedness.

The argument for the existence of the Gods, although not a strong one, is in agreement with the

spirit of the system. We have, as Epicurus alleges, clear and manifest images presented to the mind of such beings as, though like man, are superior to the infirmities of human nature; and we have also an idea of deity. In this inference from an alleged phenomenon of consciousness to the existence of its cause, Epicurus follows the analogy of the senses; and from the peculiarity attending the reception of the spectral images, he argues to a peculiarity in the structures from which they originate. But, in the first place, it would be extremely difficult to establish the alleged fact of consciousness as an original state of mind. Should we, irrespective of traditional beliefs and irrespective of the dreams which restore the dead to our intimacy, ever be visited by such phantoms of the everlasting Gods? No doubt as the years roll on, the images of departed ancestors may recur with a glory and grandeur such as gathers round the distant past, and a divine halo may embellish the recollections of our forefathers. But this alone will hardly explain deity, or justify the procedure of Epicurus in arguing from these imperfect premises.

In the second place, the inference seems to be guilty of the same fault as that leading up to the existence of the soul. The Gods or deity are, in the first instance, concluded to be extended and material substances, which are visible to the finer sensibility of the intellect. In one respect, indeed, their position is peculiar; they have no distinctive individuality; the images by which they are made known

present a family likeness, and the variety of the Olympian heaven has totally disappeared. But whatever be the case in this matter, the fact remains, that the Gods are conceived as existing after the analogy of the human animal. The godhead is a thing, and to keen perceptions should be a visible thing.

The whole doctrine amazes. Like the sceptical astronomer, Epicurus, looking all through the world, finds that he can see no God. And yet a consciousness of godhead does not allow him to deny the existence of God altogether. Hence his attempt to explain the fact so as not to interfere with his general theory. But the belief in such Gods is a mere inference of analogy. *Primus in orbe deos fecit timor*, says Petronius. "It was fear which first made gods in the world," and it is to abolish that fear that Epicurus is most anxious. The natural tendency of the untutored mind, which sees a life like its own in every object which surrounds it, its tendency when it finds its efforts thwarted, or seconded, by no apparent causes, and in utter disproportion to the energy expended, is to refer the check or assistance to some unseen being of like nature with its own. But in this reference to divine power two cases may be distinguished. When the individual feels himself one with his tribe or nation, his God is the national spirit in its unity and strength, the embodiment of the national life; who is thus regarded as the favouring and protecting genius who works for every member of the nation that walks according to its laws. The

individual, firm in the sense of national unity, sees in his God a principle and a power which is always on his side, ready to fight his battles. Temporarily, indeed, this God may turn away his face in anger, and his people may be defeated or punished by plague and famine. But for the most part in healthy political life, the religion of the State is not essentially a religion of fear, but of joy, in the Lord. It is otherwise with the individual. In all that concerns himself alone, he meets with many influences which thwart his endeavours. The powers unseen are more naturally regarded as adverse than as propitious; their interference with human wishes is more palpable than their coincidence. And when the feeling of tribal solidarity is broken by the collapse of the national State, the spirits of men naturally quail before the powers of the unseen world, and a period of superstition succeeds the period of national religion. The single believer, deprived of the strength he acquired by being a member of a great union, sees himself confronted in various directions by the threatened opposition of his God. His own consciousness emphasizes more acutely his individual acts, than in times of tribal feeling. His sins rise up to witness against him. Thus, with the growth of individual self-consciousness, and the collapse of national and collective feeling, that thought of a presence which is always with us,—a totality which determines our career and envelopes our being on every hand,—a power whose ways are not as our ways, and whose thoughts are not as our thoughts,—comes before the

mind rather as an object of dread than of affection or of confidence.

In such a situation the Stoics and Epicureans took different courses. The Stoic accepted the belief, and even carried it out to its extreme consequence. The rolling world, he said, is a living indivisible being, controlling the movements of all its parts and fixing their relation, so that nothing can take place unforeseen, because every event is the inevitable consequent of a chain of causes and a group of conditions which are all in the grasp and guidance of the universe. And yet the Stoical sage asserts his superiority to fate by affirming its decrees as his own. The Epicurean, on the other hand, rejects the notion of a single all-embracing universe. There are worlds beyond worlds, but they form no united and rounded system. When a man looks outside himself he finds only an aggregate of details, a mass of particulars like himself. There is no order in the universe irrevocably fixing his place and duty; for the universe is in a ceaseless process of change, and will not be to-morrow what it is to-day. A man, therefore, need not be dismayed. The worlds beyond worlds, which he might see in thought if he followed his teacher, are even as the world in which he lives. There is no far-off tyrant or demogorgon in the recesses of the unseen; only other worlds, and lucid interspaces between, where tranquil Gods lead a life of serenity, and meddle not with the ways of men.

CHAPTER X.

LOGIC AND PSYCHOLOGY.

Formal logic has been in all ages the *bête noire* of the empirical schools. Bacon and Locke, no less than Epicurus, express their contempt for the frivolous discussions of deductive logic, for the cobwebs by which reasoning attempts to master facts. Formal reasoning, says Bacon, constrains the assent, but not the realities. You may prove by demonstrative syllogism that black is white, but the fact all the while is otherwise. The nets of logic entrap the intellect, but he who keeps in the open air of experience can despise their sophistries. "Epicurus, the despiser and mocker of all logic," says Cicero,[1] "will not admit that such an expression as 'Hermarchus will either be alive to-morrow or not' is true, though the logicians hold that every disjunctive proposition of this shape, either yes or no, is not merely true but necessary." "Epicurus," he says, in another place,[2] "is afraid that if he admits this he must further admit that whatever happens is due to fate." To Epicurus, indeed, the two things were probably not far apart.

[1] *Acad.* I. I, 97.

[2] *De Fato*, 21; *De Nat. Deor.*, I. 69. Prof. Jevons seems to agree with Epicurus on this point.

Both fall under the charge of unduly accentuating the ideal element, of taking the relation of our ideas for a matter of fact. They are both forms of the *à priori;* they claim to anticipate and regulate experimental fact. And the *à priori*, or necessary truth, which from given experiences deduces by rational formula certain conclusions prior to experience of their occurrence, is unwelcome to Epicurus. Alike in mathematics and in deductive logic he disapproved of it. He resembles the moderns, who shrink from the iron chain of necessary law which science in its onward march seems to be drawing tighter and tighter round the free-will of man and the providence of God.

Epicurus, we are told, rejected logic. But this is only by comparison with the technical elaborations of the theory of proposition and syllogism by the Stoics and Aristotle. No philosopher can altogether avoid logic, unless he ceases to render a reason for the creed he holds. But in a system which professedly disclaimed a scholastic character, which stood aloof from declamation and neglected rhetoric, the ordinary deductive logic of Aristotle, with its disproportionate discussion of the questions of necessity and contingency—and other questions of form more than of reality—would have been of little use. As a matter of fact, the ancient logic, especially in the hypothetical syllogism, which was the great field of Stoic ingenuity, has left behind a memory redolent of sophistical and captious arguments rather than of real interest in the metaphysical questions underlying these logical disputes. And Epicureanism, whatever its faults,

always tried to steer clear of logomachies, or verbal arguing.

Still, there are questions which no system can decline to answer, if it claim to be philosophical, especially in an age when a sceptical or critical inquiry has sapped the foundations of belief. In the first period of Greek philosophy, from Thales to Anaxagoras, scientific inquiry had gone boldly on to inferences, transcending the phenomena of observation, with a free faith in the power of reason to penetrate all mysteries in the universe. The contradictory results obtained in the independent prosecution of this method by a multitude of inquirers rather discredited it. And in the second stage of philosophy, from Socrates to Aristotle, the analysis of ideas, of their connections and relations, had formed the main topics of investigation. The mind sought to win clearness in the intellectual world with a conviction that when that was accomplished there was little fear of contradiction in the external objects. It fancied that if the order of ideas was sufficiently discovered, the order of things would follow of itself. This assumption was shaken by the destructive criticism of the immediate successors of Plato and Aristotle, and by Pyrrho. Accordingly, when we come to the Stoic and Epicurean schools, the common question that is raised is, How can we know when our ideas are true and represent objective fact? Where is reality to be found?

It is the same question which at a much later age was asked in Germany as the reign of the idealists

from Kant to Hegel drew to its close. These philosophers, it was urged, have "construed" God and the universe in thought: but can they give us a reality? Can they construe the book which I hold in my hand? They construe the idea of God: but what we want is, not an idea of God, but a real living and true God. We want something positive: instead of being always led about (in the phrase of Plato)[1] from ideas to ideas through ideas. And that real God we find not in dialectic arguments and processes of logical evolution, but in two ways much more certain to give reality. The one way is to set aside reasoning, and go back to feeling, to our intuitive sense of the divine, which is the presupposition and should be the substitute of all mere argument on the topic. This was the way of Schleiermacher. The other method was to listen to the words of authentic witnesses who told the story of the Divine life, and so come directly into contact with the record of God's action; as in the former way we were brought close to the general spirit of God. This was the way of Hengstenberg. Unfortunately, it soon appeared that in the one way as in the other the rejected reason had to be reinstated. We must believe with the understanding as well as with the heart.

Something like this took place in antiquity when Epicurus and Zeno attempted to find the principle of reality which was missed by Plato and Aristotle. Reality, they declared, must be body, and the evidence

[1] *Republ.*, p. 511.

for reality must be found in the senses. The sensible and the material—such in more or less etherealized, more or less gross forms—is the universe. The only witness which, according to Epicurus, we have of reality is sensation or feeling—at least in the first instance. What our senses tell us, what our feeling vouches for, that, according to him, is true and real. But all feelings or sensations have not this characteristic. The voice of sensation or feeling, if it is to be accepted as a witness to truth and reality, must be clear and distinct, palpable, tangible, and unmistakeable. Translating more liberally, we may interpret Epicurus in the language of modern philosophy as laying down immediate consciousness as the final court of appeal. Clear and distinct consciousness is not an unfair equivalent for his ἐνάργεια τῆς αἰσθήσεως (*perspicuitas*) or evidentness of perception.[1]

In dealing with the Epicurean and Stoical theory of knowledge—their philosophy of cognition—we cannot but be reminded of an important epoch in the philosophy of our country. The problems, and the answers to these problems, are to a large extent the same as those of Locke and Hume. Sensation and reflection are much in the same comparative position and esteem in the ancient as in the modern empirical school. Neither Locke nor Epicurus fail to acknowledge in general terms the spontaneity of mind. But they do not, as Kant did, carry this superficial ad-

[1] Diog. Laert., x. 31; Cic., *Acad.*, II. 79; Lucret., IV. 480, seq.; Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, 63–66.

mission any further: they do not ask for the special character or origin of that spontaneity: having admitted it in a general way, they feel themselves absolved from the trouble of detecting its place in particulars. Hence, sensation has the main burden thrown upon it in the account given by Epicurus of the genesis of knowledge. Sense gives the real nucleus of knowledge: all else is formal. Sensation is never false: it is our inference about sensation which contains the germs of error. Even a dream or the fancy of an insane person bears witness to reality. Being an effect, it must have a cause. So-called optical illusions are only illusions to the mind. The square tower *e.g.* at a distance is seen as round: but what we actually see, viz., the spectral husk which is thrown off from the tower, has been really rounded in its progress through intervening bodies.[1] The sense, strictly speaking, spoke the truth. Error arose because the mind forgot to take account of the friction to which the image or idolon is exposed. Error is removed when we have learnt to allow for this effect of distance.

Undoubtedly Epicurus is right in standing up for the senses against those ancient philosophers who treated them with scanty courtesy. Without the senses the intellect would starve. But it is as well to add that he scarcely notices how intellect, if it is the cause of error by hasty and ungrounded inference, is also the only means of reaching the truth. It

[1] Sext. Empir., *Adv. Math.*, VII. 208; Lucret., IV. 361.

alone can heal the wounds which it inflicts. That was the lesson which Plato had taught. Epicurus, on the contrary, affirms in the language of Kant that conceptions without sensations, ideas severed from experience, are empty and unreal. A sensation is an ultimate fact; its infirmity lies in its isolation: and it is a source of error, in consequence of its susceptibility to combination and interpretation. But it must be accepted; it cannot be disputed: in the words of Epicurus, every sensation is unreasonable: we feel it, and no argument can ever make it not be. Nor can one be used to invalidate another.[1] These sensations, however, do not remain unconnected or isolated points in the mind. They naturally form unions, just as the primary atoms do in the outward world: sensations combine in various ways and build up the world of our ideas. Our conceptions gradually amalgamate and combine in obedience to such circumstances as conjuncture of occurrence, similarity of nature, similarity of relations, and the like.[2] So far Epicurus and the Stoics agree: and the same doctrine of the genesis of our conceptions from the agglutination, assimilation, and combination of simpler elements is common ground in all experiential psychology. Long before reasoning and reflection awake in any individual to form conscious and deliberate associations between the successive states of mind, the psychical or physical machinery has been silently forming its complex structure from the

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 31. [2] Ibid., x. 32; vii. 52.

rudiments furnished by the senses. It is not, for instance, by a conscious act of comparison that the perceptions of colour, taste, shape, size, in an orange have been fused into a single conception, called by one name. It is not by voluntary reflection that the sensation of this moment calls up the accumulated result of past sensations to complete itself. The phenomenon, which has been styled *apperception*, is an important factor in the explanation of mental processes. In virtue of this process the present sensation is taken up and moulded into a shape determined by some familiar habit of the mind. Every mind is in a peculiar state of susceptibility to certain impressions. Whatever the original mind may have been in the beginnings of organic life, the mind of each conscious being, as we know it, always gives a definite reaction, or interprets the data of sensation in a special way. Every image on the retina is not passively accepted, but is fused with the bent or train of thought on which it enters. We are not pure or neutral observers: the mind throws out on the incoming perception a motion of its own, and the combined movement is what we fancy ourselves to perceive.

But apart from the unconsciously operative machinery of associations, Epicurus admits the presence of reasoning in these combinations which form ideas. What at an early period of life is always done without conscious effort comes in later years to be occasionally done with voluntary agency and after reflection. Even after certain ideas have been formed by pro-

cesses which underlie consciousness, we can go on to the formation of new syntheses of sensations with one another. Of course, if it be asked how reasoning is explained by the Atomic theory, the answer does not come readily. To give in terms of matter and motion an intelligible account of what is to be understood by logical synthesis is a somewhat unpromising task. But apart from its translation into Epicurean phraseology the statement is one generally accepted.

How much is required to constitute a sensation effective or perspicuous is what we cannot tell, any more than we can state in general language what qualities in a perception "constrained assent" for the Stoics. The problem is in the last resort to be answered subjectively. A sensation is palpably distinct when it is felt to be such: and it is then a witness to external reality. The ultimate criterion of certainty is subjective consciousness: it cannot be stated in abstract or general rules applicable to all cases equally.

The point which Epicurus discusses after sensation is what he called by the technical term of προλῆψις, anticipation or preconception. It is explained as a general idea stored up, a right opinion, a conception, or the memory of what has been more than once presented to us from without.[1] When we apply a name to an object we can only do so by means of a previous conception corresponding to the name: and

[1] Diog. Laert., x. 33; Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, i. 43–44; Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, i. 57.

that conception is ultimately an image derived from the senses. Epicurus, in explaining these "anticipations," says: "In the case of every term of speech the primary ideas it conveys must be seen (by the mental eye) and not stand in need of demonstration: otherwise we shall have nothing to which to refer the point in question."

These preconceptions are not in any true sense innate. They are products of observation. Their value lies in being common to the mass of mankind, and so affording a basis of argument. In the case of any dispute, in which general terms are employed, the first question is: What clear and distinct idea can we attach to it? And this does not mean, can I define it—can I substitute one set of general terms for another? But can I really put it before my intellectual vision distinctly? Epicurus, like Bishop Berkeley, reduces general ideas to the individual images which do duty for them in the imagination. He wants us to realize our ideas in a concrete case as the true test of our having them. And here, perhaps, is a fundamental fallacy of Epicureanism. It holds that truth is identical with what is clearly and distinctly conceived. It substitutes imagination for thought. Unlike Spinoza, who contrasts the imperfect conception of the imagination with the adequate knowledge of understanding, Epicurus abides by what is easily and satisfactorily presented to the mind under a pictorial or semi-sensuous aspect. Now, imagination most easily reproduces the phenomena familiar to us of bodies in motion. The ultimate

significance of motion being neglected, we stick to the fact we have seen so often, and all the processes that occur in nature are presented under the single aspect of movement.

Epicurus, however, goes farther even than Lord Bacon in his dislike to meaningless or ambiguous language. The chancellor proposed in certain instances to remedy the fault by definition of the term. But Epicurus would have nothing to do with definition, *i.e.* with generalities and terms upon terms. He wanted a solid ground on which to stand. He would not, like the Stoics, allow the existence and quasi-independence of a middle region of words between thoughts (or mental images) and things. A word only existed as the symbol of a mental image : and therefore it must present its credentials in the shape of a *prolepsis*, *i.e.* a clear and distinct image, conveyable, not in the general terms of a definition, but in the precise and particular language of a description. Can the conception be realized as an image? If it can, it is a safe and satisfactory basis of argument : if it cannot, it must be dismissed.

A curious example of this dislike to generalities, to definitions and divisions, is seen in the contest which the Epicureans carried on against mathematics. If we believe Cicero, Epicurus declared the whole of geometry to be false : and he couples the remark with an expression of surprise as to whether Polyænus, who had a considerable mathematical reputation, had put the whole science aside after he became a disciple of Epicurus. We may be sure he did not; and the

very conjunction of the two statements suggests that Epicureanism rather expressed a view of the nature and method of geometrical truth, than a doubt as to its scientific value. What the Epicureans principally objected to, we infer, were the principles—the axioms, postulates, and definitions: though others of them, like Zeno the Sidonian, went further, and urged that there were points involved in the demonstrations which had not been explicitly accepted in the preliminary principles. Now, the definitions of geometry have the defect that they cannot be represented in any distinct image. No man can conceive an image of a geometrical line, or point, or surface; the only image which can be raised to meet these terms is that of a physical line or surface, which is evidently quite unsatisfactory for the purposes of mathematics. Even if we go a step further, we can say that the general conception of a circle or a triangle corresponding to the definitions of Euclid is such as can only be realized in special and individual instances of these figures. We need not particularly care for the abuse which, according to an ancient mathematician, they lavished on the proof of the 20th proposition of the 1st Book of Euclid, as demonstrating what was palpable even to a donkey.[1] The main ground of their attack on the mathematical sciences was, that if they started from false premises (*i.e.* not in accordance with facts), they could not be true;

[1] Proclus., *Comment. in Euclid. Element.*, p. 322, ed. Friedlein.

and to this they added a second and more sweeping one, that even if they were true, the exact sciences contributed nothing to the welfare and pleasure of human life. Here, again, we are reminded of Comte and J. S. Mill; and probably Epicurus, whom Cicero accused of overthrowing geometry, went no further than Mr. Mill, when he says that "the suppositions (from which the conclusions of geometry are deduced) are so far from being necessary, that they are not even true: they purposely depart more or less widely from the truth."[1]

These, then, are the two pillars on which Epicurean science reposes; sensations clearly and distinctly felt, and words capable of being referred to clear and distinct ideas. In the moral sphere the feelings or emotions play the same part as sensations in the theoretical. We need only say a word about another criterion of reality which was added by some Epicureans and is not excluded by Epicurus himself. These were the imaginative impressions of the intellect,[2] and in these we have a method of arriving at truth additional to sensation. The precise meaning of this source of ideas, however, has long been a subject of dispute. According to one view, they represent the free cast of the mind—*animi jactus liber* of Lucretius,[3]—which leaps out to meet the sensation, and transforms it into an intelligent perception. That Epicurus recognises spontaneity on the part of the

System of Logic, III. s. 1.

[2] φανταστικαὶ ἐπιβολαὶ τῆς διανοίας. Cf. on this topic, Tohte, *Epikurs Kriterien der Wahrheit* (Clausthal, 1874).

[3] Lucretius, v. 1047.

mind is quite true; but he notices it mainly to show that this participation of the mind is often a source of error and delusion. It is, he says, because there is a gap in the connection between the movement which originates from within and that which comes from without, that our opinions sometimes are false.[1] But this meaning would be out of place here. The "imaginative impressions on the intellect" are contrasted with the sensations in such a way as to render it more probable that we should understand by them the images which present themselves to the intellect (in the Epicurean description of it), and not to the senses. In other words, they represent the impressions derived from the *spectra* or *idola*, which are too delicate to affect the senses, but can act upon the mind.

Such *idola*, however, are of various character, and are of very different value as witnesses to real objective existence. Some of those which are incapable of moving the senses are due to accidental agglomerations of phantom husks floating about the air. For example, in such a way the image of a unicorn may rise before the mind. But as the *idola* come from no real object, no solid body (*στερέμνιον*, as Epicurus calls it), they are not evidence to more than themselves: we have the *idola* presented to the mind; but it is only in sleep, or madness, or ecstasy, that we believe these images correspond to any reality. When we are awake and in health we soon recognise that we have

[1] Diogenes Laertius, x. 51.

been the victims of illusion. There are, however, *idola,* which like these, appeal to the intellect only, and not to the senses: and these are the *idola* of the Gods. They, too, are not derived from single solid bodies; but in contradistinction to the others just mentioned they have a real object—or what, at least, is maintained to be such in the Epicurean theology. At the same time one can see why Epicurus does not distinctly enumerate these imaginative intellectual impressions among the criteria of truth and reality. They are not always to be depended upon: they are, indeed, generally to be distrusted, and trust rested solely on the deliverances of the senses. Yet, Epicurus, unwilling to surrender his belief in the Gods, seems to have recognised this avenue of ideas solely on account of its theological bearings, without minutely discussing or weighing its evidential worth.

Two cases seem to exist in which doubt may arise as to the reality or truth-bearing quality of impressions. There is the case already noticed, of the impressions that solely affect the intellect and not the senses. And on this point nothing further need be said, except that, where the imaginative forms are not dispelled by the comparison with what presents itself in daylight and in our sober moods, then they must be supposed to have some reality behind them. The other case arises in dealing with strictly sensible impressions. An instance may be taken from the field of optical illusions. The oar seems bent where it touches the water: two parallel lines seem to converge as they retire. In these phenomena it would

seem as if the senses were leagued to deceive us. But it is really an error due to the addition made by the mind to the information given by sense. The mind has transcended the merely perceived, and has given it a meaning. Imagination has been playing its game with us. In such a case we compare the interpretation given by the mind with others which have been already more securely ascertained. If the known phenomenon gives its evidence in favour of the assumed but uncertain phenomenon, or does not contradict it, the assumed perception may be taken as real and true. If, on the other hand the familiar phenomenon either controverts the interpretation adopted by the mind, or does not witness in its favour, the interpretation must be rejected as false.

But here there are two cases. There is the case where we can by observation or experiment test our provisional hypothesis, either by a future examination of the object itself or of others in similar circumstances. Thus, when we approach closer to the tower and find that it no longer appears round, we are led to modify our statement about its shape. But in our attempts to get at the real and secret causes of the phenomena of nature, such direct confirmation or confutation cannot always be looked for. In such cases, an explanation may claim our acceptance if none of the familiar phenomena with whose causes we are better acquainted contradict it, or are inconsistent with its truth. Thus, the theory that the real substratum of the world, external and internal, is to be found in the atoms and the void,

cannot be proved by direct evidence from sensation. The atoms are too small to be singly perceived; and the void, because it is the non-existent, cannot be perceived either. Hence, the existence of atoms is only to be established, first, when we have shown that any other explanation of the phenomena is at variance with observed facts; and, secondly, when we have shown that all the phenomena of the universe are consistent with the hypothesis of atoms, and that the laws which regulate the movement of the atoms are in agreement with the laws which we have found to prevail throughout the range of familiar facts.

The atomic theory of Epicurus, therefore, is a hypothesis, basing its claim for acceptance on the harmony which it introduces into our conception of the universe. He began, as we saw, by declaring that the individual and subjective certainty of sensation is the basis and starting-point of any attempt to reach reality or truth and objective certainty. But, though the starting-point, it is far from being all that is needful to secure the end we desire. For in every perception, *i.e.*, in every interpretation of sensation, there is a meeting of elements: the object perceived, and the subject perceiving, severally contribute their quota to the result. But the tendency thus exhibited is a source of error, as well as of truth. The currnet of impression from the object may lead us into confusion, so also may the current which starts from the subject perceiving. In these circumstances it is necessary to compare our perceptions with those of others in the same phenomena, and to compare

similar phenomena with one another at different times. In this way we gain a tolerable working certainty, sufficient for all ordinary purposes. What others perceive no less than ourselves, and what is perceived identically at different times and places, may safely be looked upon as real and true.

So far as this goes, however, we are not yet in the region of scientific certainty. All men agree in perceiving the movement of the sun across the sky, its rise and setting; and the phenomenon is repeated at different places and times without any variation. The perception, therefore, that the earth is at rest, and the sun revolves around it, was established as an objective certainty for common use. But the Copernican doctrine is a scientific truth which entitles us to set the ordinary perception and its certainty aside. How is the step from the one degree of certainty to be made to the other? By the same process which, when carried to a certain extent, gave the average certainty of daily life; by a repetition and extension of the method of comparison and correction which was applied to the perceptions of the individual. In this way it may turn out that there are constituent elements in the accepted perception which are strictly subjective in their origin. The aim of the process is to discover an objective certainty, something which, in all perceptions, turns out to be a permanent datum. It is the elimination of all which is merely subjective which led Democritus and Epicurus to assert the theory of atoms. They held that all the phenomena of perception could be satisfactorily ex-

plained, and, in some instances, explained away, by means of their doctrine. They believed that they had found in the atoms a fundamental truth by which the process of sensation itself could be understood, and things and thought alike receive their fair place in the world. A molecular constitution of the world, in which the molecules were homogeneous, and only varied in size and shape, and that within infinitesimal limits (compared with ordinary visible differences), and in which these molecules, though infinitely numerous, were always separated from one another by an interspace of larger or smaller expanse: this seemed to them to get rid of numerous difficulties which any other theories involved, and to produce a conception of the universe which was harmonious and accordant with every fact of perception.

Epicureanism, therefore, is far from denying the operation of intellectual or rational factors in the process of knowledge. What it does affirm is, that in the earliest stages of experience a great deal goes on by spontaneous aggregation of the materials furnished by sensation, quite apart from the influence of reasoning and reflection. Its point is rather like that of Kant in his *Critique of the Reason*. Thought, except so far as it has materials from sensation to work upon, is only engaged in building houses upon the sand for the tide to sweep away. But in the elaboration of that material, in a criticism and sifting of the ideas which have grown up by nature thought has its proper function, and obviously a

highly important one. It may be said, indeed, How can Epicurus, regarding the soul as atoms in combination, attach any meaning to its thought? This, indeed, is a weighty objection, not, however, only against Epicureanism, but against all attempts to render patent the mechanism and operation of mind. And further, it is not one whit more difficult for Epicurus to regard a concourse of atoms as thinking than to regard them as active in any way whatever. It is as hard, and as easy, for an atom to move as it is for an atom or group of atoms to think.

Like many other philosophers, who in their systematic exposition ignore thought and mind, Epicurus starts from the assumption of consciousness or mind in activity. The very existence of philosophizing presupposes the exercise of thought. But this initial adoption of the mental point of view does not, in his case, lead on to any further examination of the nature of consciousness, and the consequences which flow from the recognition of its powers. He does not, like Descartes, proceed from "I think" to "I am," and from our being to the being of an infinite God, the upholder of all things and ourselves. He does not, like Kant, proceed specially to ask, What are the precise features of this consciousness by which I survey the world, and how far do they necessarily mould and form our conceptions of nature? He does not even ask, like Plato and Aristotle, what are the relations of this thinking to the data of sense, and how the grades and modes of our conceptions of things are to be arranged and classified. The pro-

blem of classification, involving the questions as to the nature of genera and their species, and their relation to individual existence, has no interest for Epicurus. The logic of Aristotle and the Stoics, with its analysis of the processes of classificatory (dividing and defining) thought, is wholly removed in his eyes from any practical value. One part of logic only is of interest either to him or to his school. And that part is the theory of induction and analogy, and, in general, of the process by which we are entitled to extend what we have observed in one case to cases lying beyond the range of direct observation.

It was long supposed, indeed, that because the Epicureans rejected the scholastic logic of the Stoics they had given no attention to general logical questions. The manuscripts of Herculaneum have enabled us to correct this view, and taught us that the Epicureans were interested in those questions which lie at the root of all inductive logic. The treatise of Philodemus on Symptoms and Symptomatization is, as its editor entitles it, an essay on inductive reasoning.[1] It is in the main a defence of the analogical argument from a known case to the existence of certain properties in an unobserved case of generally similar character. The Stoics, against whom the essay is directed, were assailants who refused to admit anything but purely deductive reasoning. "How can we," it is asked, "pass from the

[1] Gomperz, *Herkulanische Studien*, I. (Leipzig, 1865), with the Commentary by Fr. Bahnsch (Lyck 1879); cf. Gomperz in *Zeitschrift für Oesterreichische Gymnasien* (1872), pp. 24–32.

known and apparent to the unapparent? Must we first of all, embrace the whole range of appearances, or certain only amongst them? To do the former is impossible; and as for the latter"—(here the papyrus leaves us in the lurch. But the context shows that Philodemus is quoting an argument as to how far we may argue, from the length of life commonly reached, to abnormal instances, and enumerating the circumstances which we know to make a difference in the length). "As there are variations due to air, and food, and physiological constitution, so there may be cases due to other differences. Are we therefore either to argue from the cases which exhibit no variety of nature or force, or from those which present dissimilar features? To start from a completely identical case is of no value as a symptom or sign; whilst to argue from a dissimilar case fails in proving anything just on account of the dissimilarity." To this the reply of the Epicurean Zeno was: "It is not, on the one hand, necessary to examine the whole range of familiar facts, nor, on the other hand, are any casual instances sufficient. We must examine several instances which, though exhibiting variations, still belong to the same kind or class of things, so that from what happens in their case, and from the facts recorded about them, we may discover the inseparable concomitants of each several case, and then carry on the inference to other cases." Such a rule, though it has a slight resemblance to Mill's method of agreement, is too indefinite to be of much value. The Epicureans evidently felt that there were certain

uniformities which might claim the title of natural laws, and others which were mere empirical statements; but they cannot state in a distinct formula what makes the difference between the two cases. They give no sign of feeling the difficulty which lies under the statement, that the cases examined are to belong to the same "kind;" they do not, that is, inquire how "kinds" come to be framed either in logic or in nature. Of course, if things were all arranged under genera, induction and analogy are easy, and perhaps trifling processes. Thus, if we give them the merit as against their Stoic and Peripatetic rivals of emphasizing the place of the so-called "imperfect induction" in the process of science, and of even asserting particular experience as the foundation of all certainty, we cannot go further; and must add that, so far as our information goes, they did little or nothing towards establishing a truly scientific logic of induction. They seem here, as elsewhere, only to expound and defend the doctrines of their master, perhaps, as was natural, modifying and developing while they only professed to apologize. There is little evidence in favour of any influence of Epicureanism on the sciences. It no doubt affirmed the law of causation, but almost solely against divine interference. Asclepiades, a physician and scholar of the time of Cicero, is sometimes said to have introduced Epicureanism into medicine; but apparently only on very general grounds.[1]

[1] Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.*, x. 318.

As the Epicureans in general rejected logic, so they also rejected any metaphysical investigation of the conditions and nature of thought. Except as a means of scientific investigation and of practical guidance, thought had no interest for them. They, at least, could scarcely be accused of introspection, of turning the mind back upon itself, of "thinking about thinking." They ignored the self or ego, and if they dealt with it at all, treated it as a thing among other things of similar character and agency. They saw themselves only as part of the natural universe, and not as occupying a special pedestal and possessing a power which might be said to be the basis and creator of all things. They found themselves exposed to influences on every hand, and making part of an endless series of accidents, of action and reaction going on incessantly. This common action, they argued, was only possible on the ground of a community of nature. And they were right.

But they were wrong in supposing that the similarity of nature freed them from the task of investigating fundamental differences. Like some modern systems, just because the "I think" and "I will" accompanies all our perceptions, they felt themselves entitled to suppress the ego. They saw it mainly act as a cause of error,—interfering with the play of natural forces. Truth is impersonal, objective: opinion is subjective and personal. The intervention of mind seemed to be only a signal for mistake and falsehood. And the popular conceptions of mind are not so clear as to cause much trouble to such a

course. One can find indistinctness and flaws in the semi-materialized images which in ordinary minds are all that can be found to represent the terms of spirit, God, will, freedom, and the like. The products which imagination gives its votaries—and those are the great bulk of mankind—cannot long stand the strokes of criticism. They are soon shown to contain incompatible elements, to be self-contradictory. Ask any one what he understands by the "I" of which he constantly speaks; and if he proceeds, like Alcibiades, in one of the doubtful dialogues accredited by the title of Platonic, to the soul, it will not be hard to show him that he cannot attach any clear figuration to what Aristotle defined as the "actuality of an organic body, implicitly possessed of life." The energy of thought is by Epicurus always reduced to a phase of imagination: sensation is envisaged under the aspect of motion. The ideal world becomes a world of visibles in movement. In the world as thus described, there is, to quote the words of Professor Tyndall,[1] "nothing which necessarily eludes the conceptive or imagining power of the human mind. An intellect, the same in kind as our own, would, if only sufficiently expanded, be able to follow the whole process from beginning to end. It would see every molecule placed in its position by the specific attractions and repulsions exerted between it and other molecules; the whole process and its consummation being an instance of the play of molecular force." Of

[1] *Fragments of Science*, vol. II. p. 83.

course, for "the attractions and repulsions" alluded to by Professor Tyndall, we should substitute the impacts of atom upon atom in the Epicurean theory; a difference which would not render the process less imaginable. But when we come to consciousness and the relation to the physics of the brain, the case is otherwise. "Granted," says the same writer,[1] "that a definite thought and a definite molecular action in the brain occur simultaneously, we do not possess the intellectual organ, nor apparently any rudiment of the organ, which would enable us to pass by a process of reasoning from the one to the other."

If we have rightly understood Epicurus, he has simply ignored the ego and consciousness, and turned solely to externality. He has adopted the attitude of science, and not the attitude of philosophy. He has fairly enough employed the ordinary conceptions of matter to explain the processes of growth, nutrition, sensation. If not an adequate mode of conceiving these processes, it has, at least for most minds, the merit of affording an easy and simple *rationale* of them. But as a philosopher he should have gone further. His only answer, however, to the question, "What are we?" is, that we are what we see, and if our vision were expanded might see. Each of us is an *object* of sensitive and intellectual vision: of the other fact, that each is a *subject*, he says nothing. And by a subject is not meant merely that each of us

[1] *Fragments of Science*, vol. II. p. 87.

is active as well as passive. For that matter, the same may be said of every piece of corporeal substance in the universe : activity and passivity are the very characteristics of existence in its very shape. But in each of us there is the further element of consciousness, sentiment, feeling, will, and knowledge. Of this Epicurus has no other explanation than to say that it is nothing separable from certain combinations of molecules, and may even be treated as a mere aggregation of ethereal atoms.

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORICAL SKETCH AND CONCLUSION.

Even in the life-time of Epicurus his disciples and adherents were numerous. His personal influence seems to have acted as a charm. Yet probably his mind was one neither fitted for abstruse speculation nor susceptible of deep feeling and lofty sentiment. Everything seems to show that he was as indifferent to the vocations of the scholar and the artist as he confessedly was to the business and intrigues of political life. The magic of his power lay in the bright and sweet humanity of his person and character. Possessed of a calm and happy temper, which passion and lust did not easily excite, and of a perspicuous eye which saw through the hollowness of mere word-wisdom and the dishonesty of many social conventions, he blended the underlying cynicism of his nature with so much geniality and urbanity that no trace is to be found of the sourness of the disappointed prophet or of the sternness of the moral reformer. Though he lived out of the world, he had nothing of the recluse or of the ascetic about him. Unlike other teachers, he was not for ever claiming to be called "Rabbi, Master." He lived among his followers like an elder brother; not as a professor among

pupils. His was a pre-eminently social nature, finding in friendly communion the very salt without which life lost its savour. Women were conspicuous among his friends; and without going so far as to call him a ladies' man, one may say that he exhibited a decided taste for feminine society; of deeper relations to the fair sex, however, there is no indication; and it seems improbable that he should have felt a grand passion. His nature was too calm and his affections too generically human for that. Perhaps for that very reason he was the better fitted to become the focus of an admiring and affectionate fraternity. With no wife or children of his own, he was more likely to become the correspondent of other women, and to have a warm heart for the children of others. Self-centred without selfishness, kindly without intensity or passion, wise without pedantry, Epicurus naturally had many friends and adherents.

The aim and character of his doctrine were also such as to awaken interest and win popularity. In name, at least, he proposed pleasure as the end of life; and even if the pleasure he meant was not what vulgar sensualists understood by the word, the name was one that did not repel that numerous class who cannot understand why unhappiness should be treated as intrinsically meritorious. A dogma of this kind is perhaps especially appropriate to the sunny south and to the bright-souled and simple-tasted Greek. Without wholly breaking away from the traditions of the national faith, he nullified the power of the priest, the confessional, and the indulgence-monger, by

denying to deity both the will and the power to punish human beings for their conduct. He attempted even to dispel the terrors of death and the grave, by representing it to a weary world as an endless and dreamless sleep. He did not disdain to deal even with precepts of diet and hygiene,—as matters of importance if life was to be made as happy as it might. To explain the origin of the world and man, he gave a theory which called for no extraordinary acumen, no preliminary study of mathematics, no scientific training, but was level to the comprehension of ordinary minds. Professing to build upon the irrefutable testimony of sensation, he dismissed logical intricacies as superfluous. Above all, he gave an unhesitating dogmatic answer to the doubts and anxieties which perplexed men then as they do now, as to whence man comes and whither he goes. Instead of criticism and argument, he propounded what claimed to be an infallible aim for action, and a complete theory of existence. At last, he said, after the world has for ages groped for a way amid the darkness of superstition, and after one philosophic system after another has tossed men to-and-fro on a sea of groundless opinions, at last the true light has been revealed. Henceforth the way seemed to be made clear; erring wanderers had only to learn and practise the precepts of the Gargettian sage, and thereafter their lives would be happy and their souls at rest.

It need cause no surprise, therefore, when Cicero declares that, not merely Greece and Italy, but the barbarian world lying round soon felt the influence

of Epicureanism.[1] To minds burnt up by the unavailing strife of politics, and harassed by a succession of wars and rumours of wars, a creed which released man from the bondage of political life could not but be welcome. After the conquest of Persia and the tightening of the ties between Asia and Greece, as well as Egypt, which followed that event, the Greek world was forced to surrender its burghal exclusiveness, its petty jealousies between town and town, its antiquated distinctions of class, its contempt for the foreigner and the "barbarian." The old civic constitutions fell in pieces, fortune and power changed hands, the old seats of supremacy had to be yielded to young and untried aspirants, in the shape of those erewhile secondary states which now came to the front. People of alien race and sensibilities got mixed up together. And if this was the effect of the Macedonian conquests, still greater was the influence of the advance of Roman power in producing like results. From that time cosmopolitanism became a fact as well as an idea, for the many races brought under the dominion of Rome. To such a cosmopolitan society, the great majority in which had, and could have, no interest in war and politics, the gospel of Epicurus came as a message of good tidings. He pronounced openly the thought which everybody was in secret cherishing. He spoke to the poor and the unlearned, as well as to the rich and educated. To science and art, to culture and

[1] Cicero, *De Fin.*, II. 49.

learning, Epicureanism was almost hostile, so long, at least, as it saw in them attractions which withdrew men from the one thing needful. A mere literary and æsthetic as well as a mere scientific training were not, according to Epicurus, adequate for man: humanity is greater than either art or science. The Stoic philosopher had to tread a mazy path of dialectic before he could reach the higher wisdom of life, and to some minds the fascinations of difficulty were so strong that they forgot the great end of all logic, and spent their lives in intellectual warfare. But on the Epicurean there was not imposed the necessity of maintaining a lengthy argument in defence of his faith. His duty was to apprehend and remember the precepts and principles enunciated by the founder of his sect. These principles were simple, and the precepts seemed easy to follow. The question was often asked: Why are there so many Epicureans? No doubt many were attracted by the promising name of pleasure. To such might apply the sarcasm of Arcesilaus, who, when asked why there were so many deserters to Epicureanism from other schools, while no Epicurean ever became a renegade, replied: "A man may become a eunuch, but a eunuch can never become a man."[1] The theology of Epicureanism, too, had its charm. There is an unmistakeable earnestness in the tone of Lucretius, when he speaks of the awful load of religion under which the world of his time lay

[1] Diogenes Laertius, IV. 6, 43.

crushed. And strange as it may sound, the very idea of a divine Providence watching over the ways and fates of men meant only the uneasy and gruesome sense of a ghostlike presence always hovering around.[1]

The historical circumstances of the age of Epicurus can scarcely be dissevered from his doctrines. The wars of the Diadochi, or successors of Alexander, the chaos of Grecian politics, and the career of Agathocles, the despot of Syracuse, seem a practical and illustrative commentary on the morals and theology of Epicureanism. The reader of the lives of Eumenes and Demetrius in Plutarch, and of the books of Diodôrus, which trace the vicissitudes of Sicilian history from 317 to 289 B.C., almost feels that he has looked upon a world from which the merciful and righteous Gods have departed. A story told of Danaè, the daughter of Epicurus's Leontion, may illustrate the impression. This lady was the friend and companion of Laodicè, the widow (and murderess) of Antiochus the Second. She had learnt that her royal mistress had decided to put treacherously to death an officer named Sophron, and she gave the latter, who had once been her lover, an intimation of the doom intended for him. Sophron made his escape: and Laodice, in her indignation, ordered Danaè to be thrown down a precipice. The unhappy girl, who had disdained to say a word in the presence of her destroyer, broke out, as she was led to her execution,

[1] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I. 54.

in these words : " The world does right to despise the Gods. This is the reward I receive from God for saving my husband, while Laodicè, who has killed hers, is invested with honour."[1] Few epochs in history have been so disastrous in their immediate effects upon the happiness and the morality of mankind. But, like the wars of the First Napoleon, the contests of the tyrants and usurpers of the age of the Diadochi perhaps helped to prepare the world for a larger measure of freedom and federation.

Of the actual spread of Epicureanism during the two centuries after the death of Epicurus we are only vaguely informed. But that it did spread and that a succession of teachers carried on the tradition of the school are certain. It is probably to the close of the third century B.C. that we must refer two incidents which are handed down on the authority of the lexicographer Suidas. His statement is that some Epicureans took up their abode in the town of Lyctos or Lyttos in Crete. A decree was at once promulgated for their expulsion. It banished from the town " those who had invented a womanish and ignoble and disgraceful philosophy, and who were enemies of the Gods." If, however, the offenders should return, (the decree continued) a worse penalty awaited them. They were to be set fast in the stocks, naked, their skin besmeared with milk and honey, and left for twenty days to the stings of the wasp and gadfly. If they survived this horrible ordeal, they were next to

[1] Athenæus, XIII. 64.

be dressed like women, and dashed to death from the top of a rock. At Messenè, in the Peloponnesus, Suidas locates another case of like fanaticism. The Epicureans were outlawed as defilers of the temples and as a disgrace to philosophy, through their atheism and indifference : they were ordered to be beyond the borders of Messenè before sunset, and the magistrates were directed to purify the city and shrines from all traces of the heretics.[1] We can almost fancy as we read that we are dealing with a persecution of the Christians in the second century of the Empire, or with the rough methods sometimes employed to check Roman Catholicism. One would have been glad to know more of the circumstances, and of the special characters of the Epicureans in question. In the absence of such details, we may infer that the acts in question had something to do with the bitterness and intensity of political enmities due to the contests of the Achæan and Ætolian Leagues, of Macedonia and Sparta, during the years from 250 to 150 B.C. The offence of the "Epicureans" so-called was doubtless political dissidence, rather than religious heresy, though the latter charge might be used to justify an attack made really on the former ground. In the case of Lyttos, particularly, we have the facts of the coalition of the other Cretan states against it, and the complete and treacherous destruction of the city by the rival town of Cnossos about the year 200 B.C.[2]

The pious and bigoted Aelian, who lived towards

[1] Under the word "Epicurus." [2] Polybius, IV. 53-54.

the close of the second century A.D. wrote a work on Providence, in which the Epicureans largely figured.[1] From the fragments which editors have patched together out of the references in dictionaries, we learn that it was full of tales of divine judgments on unbelievers, and of miraculous conversions. One of the unconsecrated ministrants in the mysteries, he tells us, an adherent of the effeminate and impious creed of Epicurus, pushed forward into the most holy place, where none save the high-priest might enter, and would thus have practically evinced his disbelief in the interference of the Gods with man. Suddenly he was seen to shudder, and a wasting disease fell upon him. In another story, an Epicurean, who was suffering from pleurisy, was taken into the temple of Æsculapius; and while there was told in a dream by one of the priests that his only remedy was to burn the books of Epicurus he possessed, and apply the ashes kneaded up with wax as a poultice. His subsequent restoration to health is said—and not unnaturally—to have made a deep impression on his fellow free-thinkers. Another Epicurean, again, who was heard scoffing at the vows and prayers made by the worshippers at the altar of Castor and Pollux, was attacked by an offended believer, who seized the sword of one of the Twins and smote the reviler, hurling at the same time a blast of defiance against Epicurus and his dogmas.

Whatever we may think of the truth of these stories,

[1] Aelian, *Fragmenta* (ed. Hercher), from Suidas.

their general meaning is tolerably clear. The objections to the Epicureans rest on two grounds. The first is their abstinence from political duty: their philosophy is womanish. Even in modern times the public mind has regarded with distrust those sects which, like the Quakers or the Unitarians of Transylvania, have refused some of the recognised obligations of the citizen. Much more would an ancient city, obliged constantly to defend itself against enemies without and within, abhor and punish the advocates of political indifferentism. And apparently political life in Greece had been much quickened after the time of Epicurus. The reforms attempted in Sparta by Agis and Cleomenes, and the extension of the Achæan league, were the closing exhibitions of the old spirit of Hellenic life, before Rome reduced all to silence.

The second charge against the Epicureans was that of atheism and irreligion. In general they were the avowed enemies of superstition and priestly deception. Though, like Epicurus himself, they did not ostentatiously dissent from the national rites of religion,[1] they were suspicious of all secret worships, mysteries, and the like. This position, curiously enough, seems on one occasion to have made them the allies of the Christians. In the second century A.D. Paphlagonia was ringing with the fame of a new prophet, Alexander by name, who had set up an oracle at Abonutichos, which was the object of pious

[1] Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, 1. 85.

pilgrimages from far and near. According to the essayist Lucian, who describes the rise and progress of this charlatan, the Epicureans, who were numerous in the provinces bordering on the Euxine, detected and published the tricks by which Alexander managed to impose upon his admirers. The false prophet immediately appealed to the fanaticism of the province to destroy his opponents, who included Christians as well as Epicureans. He waged a merciless war against Epicurus "the man who had studied the nature of things, and who alone knew the truth that was in them." To the inhabitants of Amastris, which was the head-quarters of the Epicurean opposition, he denied all approach to the privileges of his sanctuary. At his solemn religious ceremonial, the service was preceded by the herald's proclaiming (after the manner of a similar proclamation made at the Eleusinian Mysteries): "If any atheist, Christian or Epicurean, has come to spy the sacred rites, let him depart." And as the herald called, "Away with the Christians," the people responded, "Away with the Epicureans." The catechism or articles of Epicurus, even, the prophet caused to be burnt on the public square, and its ashes to be thrown into the Euxine. "He knew not," says Lucian in a passage of unusual earnestness, "what blessings that book brings to those who come to it, what peace and tranquillity and freedom it works within them, setting them free from terrors and spectres and portents, from vain hopes and superfluous desires, putting within them truth and understanding, and truly purifying their souls,

not by torch and squills, and such idle ceremonials, but by right understanding, and truth and open-mindedness." Of Epicurus he speaks as "a man truly sacred and prophetic in nature, who alone knew and taught the good and true, and was the liberator of those who companied with him."[1]

Erelong a third charge was added to the list of impeachments. The name Epicurean was identified with sensualist: an Epicure was another name for a gourmand. And this view of Epicureanism, which apparently came latest, was also perhaps in later times the most widely spread.

It is impossible to say precisely when Epicureanism appeared at Rome. When the ambassadors of Athens arrived at Rome in 155 B.C. to plead the cause of their city in the question of Orôpus, they included no representatives of Epicureanism. Carneades of the Academy, Critolaus the Peripatetic, and Diogenes the Stoic, carried off the honours of the day. Yet Epicureanism had quietly found its way to the capital of the world. About the middle of the second century, an obscure statement tells us, two Epicureans, Alcius and Philiscus, were expelled from Rome on the ground of immoral influence on the young.[2] It is certain that about that period the Roman government made some ineffectual attempts to check the corruption of manners and the decline of faith, which accompanied the conquest of the

[1] Lucian, *Alexander s. Pseudomantis*, 25, 38, 47, 61.
[2] Athenæus, XII. 68.

transmarine provinces. The decree against the Bacchanalia in 186 and the general order given to the executive in 161 B.C. to keep a sharp eye on philosophers and rhetoricians, betray uneasiness in the governing circles at Rome.[1]

The earliest expositor of Epicureanism in Latin was a person called Amafinius: and the publication of his work was the signal for large accessions to the sect of Epicurus.[2] The attractive power did not lie in the style in which the new doctrine was conveyed. The writings of Amafinius, like those of Epicurus himself and those of later Epicureans, were written in a vulgar language, and dealt with very common things. They were devoid of rhetorical embellishments, and even of logical order. The scholarly critic of the period remarked that they were *said* to be in Latin: but he regarded them as far from classical in form, and beneath the dignity of science in their contents. Cicero himself is fain to boast that he had not read them. They wrote, he says, for their own sect, and not for the literary world: and as they neglect the graces of style, the public passes them by. It is the same argument as a classical author two centuries later might have used to set aside the letters of St. Paul or of early Christian writers on the ground of defective style. Yet, as in the case of the Christian Scriptures, these badly-arranged and poorly-written words of the Epicureans

[1] Aulus Gellius, XV. 11.

[2] Cicero, *Acad. Post.*, I. 5; *Tusc. Disp.*, IV. 6; *ib.* II. 7; *De Fin.*, III. 40.

had the power to convert men. Nor was Amafinius alone. A host of writers sprang up in his train, and, in the words of Cicero, took possession of all Italy. But the only names recorded in literature are those of Rabirius, and Catius the Insubrian. The latter died before 45 B.C., and is mentioned by Cicero only casually: a later critic speaks of him as a not unpleasant writer.[1] Even the great poet who wedded Epicureanism to immortal verse, Lucretius Carus, is mentioned by Cicero only to say that he agrees with his brother Quintus in considering the poem to indicate skill more than brilliancy or power. The poem on the Nature of Things—*De Natura Rerum*—was published in 54 B.C., and its author had apparently died the year previously in the forty-fourth year of his age. Poetry can scarcely be regarded as an adequate exponent of philosophical doctrine. But if we except the abstract exposition of the theory of constituent atoms and of vision, Epicureanism with its freedom from logic and metaphysics, its direct appeal to the ordinary mind, the pathos of its ethical tone, and the humanistic character of its historical philosophy, seems more congenial to poetry than any of its contemporary systems. The perennial charm of Lucretius is due partly to his dignity and apostolic earnestness, partly to his fresh eye for the phenomena of nature and humanity.

There are other indications of the progress of Epicureanism at this epoch. A professor of Greek,

[1] Quintilian, x. 1, 124.

Pompilius Andronicus, by birth a Syrian, who must have been contemporary with Lucretius, spoiled his chances as a teacher of literature by his devotion to Epicureanism. It was supposed that his creed would make him indolent in his teaching and less able to maintain discipline: and so the poor man saw himself distanced in the competition by inferior men. He withdrew to Cumæ, and there living frugally and working hard he produced a valuable critical treatise, which he was glad to sell anonymously in order to gain a livelihood.[1] Amongst the circle of Cicero's friends there were many Epicureans—more perhaps than members of any other sect. Atticus, a wealthy, cultured, and kindly man, who steered clear of politics, stands first in the list: and with him one may join Verrius, Saufeius, Papirius Pætus, Trebatius Pansa, and Cassius, one of the assassins of Cæsar. Cicero himself drew his first draughts of philosophy from the wells of the Epicureans. Phædrus, an illustrious member of the sect, contemporary with Zeno of Sidon, its head for the time, had found his way to Rome, and about the year 90 B.C. gave young Cicero his first philosophical lessons. The friendship thus begun was terminated only by the death of Phædrus. The orator always speaks of his early teacher with kindly respect. Originally esteemed for his instruction, Phædrus, when his philosophy had ceased to interest, was still dear to him for his probity, virtue, and urbanity. In the year 79 B.C. Cicero spent six

[1] Suetonius, *De Grammaticis*, 8.

months at Athens among the philosophers, chiefly attending the lectures of Zeno of Sidon on Epicureanism. Not long before Athens had suffered terribly from the arms of Rome. In the war between Mithridates of Pontus and the Romans, Athens took the side of the Oriental. Aristion, or Athenion, a philosophical professor, sometimes spoken of as a Peripatetic and sometimes as an Epicurean, induced the turbulent spirits of Athens to join in the crusade against the great despotism of the West. Throwing himself at the head of 2,000 men into the city he got rid of all who were too rich or too indifferent to risk a desperate struggle for freedom, and made himself absolute dictator. Sulla, after a tedious blockade, in which the groves of the philosophers were cut down to furnish *matériel* of war, took the city by storm; and the last frantic effort for Greek independence was quenched in seas of blood.[1]

Cicero subsequently paid a visit to Athens in 51 B.C., when he was on his way to the provincial government of Cilicia. Even at this date the displacement of the old site of Athens had begun: and in the general movement of habitation to the northward the quarters of the city nearest the harbour were falling into decay. The house of Epicurus was a ruin: and a Roman noble, the very Memmius to whom Lucretius dedicated his poem, had got the authorisation of the Areopagus to employ it as a building-site.

[1] Appian, *Mithridat.*, 28; Athenæus, v. 48–53; Pausanias, I. 20.

Whether the proposed edifice was a memorial to Epicurus we know not: at any rate, the Epicureans were alarmed at the suggestion to desecrate their holy places. Patro, who was now the head of the sect, wrote to Cicero, whom Phædrus had interested in the question, and asked him to interfere and maintain for the sake of the society, "honour, duty, testamentary right, the injunction of Epicurus, the protest raised by Phædrus, the abode, the dwelling, the footprints of illustrious men." As Atticus supported the request, Cicero promised to write to Memmius, who had already abandoned his architectural designs, but was on bad terms with Patro. The issue of the intervention is unknown.[1]

Philodemus, another Epicurean writer of the Ciceronian epoch, has, through the discoveries at Herculaneum, attained a celebrity which his intrinsic merits would scarcely claim. Like many philosophers of those ages, he was not a Greek, but a Syrian,—a native of Gadara, on the skirts of the Anti-Libanus. In classical history he is known as the author of a few erotic stanzas in the Greek Anthology, and is alluded to by Horace, Cicero, and Diogenes Laertius. In his attack upon Piso Cæsoninus, however, Cicero, without naming Philodemus, describes him; and the rolls of Herculaneum form a comment on his words. In the speech—a long fierce tirade against Piso and Gabinius, during whose consulship Cicero had been exiled from Rome—there is a graphic picture of the

[1] Cicero, *Epist. ad Fam.*, XIII. 1; *ad Attic.*, V. 19.

grim, haggard, earnest face of Piso, and the girlish, curled head of Gabinius. Piso bears the brunt of the assault. He is described as a barbarous Epicurus, an Epicurus from the pigsty, an Epicurus moulded out of potter's clay and mud. "With him," says Cicero. "lives a certain Greek whom I know to be a person of refinement. He has attached himself to young Piso, and become his constant comrade. But the pupil fails to appreciate the distinctions drawn by his friend and guide. This Greek, unlike other professors of Epicureanism, is at home in literature. His poems display inimitable grace, felicity, and humour. Unfortunately, his artistic powers are often put at the disposal of his pupil."[1] The Epicurean philosopher, whose position as the client of the powerful Piso Cicero thus deplores, was the Philodemus whose treatises have been unearthed from the Herculanean villa.

We need not attempt to give a complete list of the Epicurean names under the Empire. Just because independent opinion was less esteemed than in other schools, we may expect to find fewer distinguished adherents. Nor can we always pronounce those to be Epicureans who remind us of its characteristic doctrines. In Cæsar and Catullus, still more in Virgil and Horace, we detect features of Epicureanism. One of the Lives of Virgil tells us how he lived for several years in leisurely freedom, after the manner and doctrine of Epicurus. And the words of the

[1] Cicero, *In Pisonem*.

Georgics which praise "the blessedness of him who has learned the secrets of the world, and has laid beneath his feet all fears, and the doom which no man can escape and the din of Acheron craving its prey," are in the genuine spirit of Epicurus and Lucretius. In the early Empire we find frequent allusion to characteristic Epicurean tenets,—to its theory of sense-perception and its anti-providential dogmas. Both Seneca and Juvenal speak of Epicureanism in no inimical terms. Quintilian seems to have been chiefly struck by its hostility to liberal culture.[1] Its schools at Athens were still frequented. Apollonius of Tyana, who went the round of the sects, heard a course on Epicureanism: "for even it he did not disdain to study."[2] Two Epicureans are mentioned in the symposium of Plutarch. The treatise of Lucian above alluded to (p. 249) is addressed to an Epicurean named Celsus, who lived in the time of Hadrian. He has been identified by Origen and subsequent writers with the author of the "True Discourse," the earliest polemic against Christianity which remains to us; but almost certainly this identification is a mistake.

About the year 176 A.D., the Emperor Marcus Aurelius assigned to each of the four schools of ancient philosophy a yearly revenue of 10,000 drachmæ.[3] Whether this sum went to a single pro-

[1] Quintil., II. 7, 16; XII. 2, 24.

[2] Philostratus, *Apoll. Tyan.*, 6.

[3] Lucian, *Eunuch.*, 3; Philostr., *Vit. Soph.*, II. 3; Dio Cassius, LXXI. 31.

fessor, or was divided among several, we know not. We are told that the emperor left the choice of the professor to Herodes Atticus, the patron of philosophy in that period. After his time the appointment seems to have been vested, probably, in the Areopagus, who decided after hearing the competitors. Of these professors of Epicureanism we hear nothing. Aulus Gellius, who studied philosophy at Athens while Herodes Atticus was there, hardly alludes to Epicureanism, save to quote the bitter words of Hierocles the Stoic: "Pleasure the end, is a harlot's doctrine: no providence, is not even a harlot's doctrine."[1] Longinus, who visited Athens for a similar purpose about 240 A.D., though he speaks of the teachers of other schools, does not even mention the Epicureans.[2] Yet if Epicureanism was not in good odour at the University of Athens, it would be a mistake to infer that it had been reduced to silence. The physicist Cleomêdes, who cannot be placed earlier than the second century, attacks the doctrines of Epicurus in language so vehement that one must believe they still had considerable popularity. And Diogenes Laertius seems also to testify to its continued existence in his day. Yet, in the latter half of the fourth century Epicureanism had no longer a following, and even its literature had begun to disappear. "Praised be the Gods," exclaims the Emperor Julian, "for having annihilated Epicurean doctrine so com-

[1] Aulus Gellius, VIII. 5, 8.
[2] Porphyrius, *De vita Plotini*, 20.

pletely that its books even are grown scarce."[1] Naturally, in the closing struggle between paganism and Christianity, a system like Epicureanism was out of place. The only philosophy in which dying polytheism could hope to find comfort was the spiritualist doctrine of Neo-Platonism.

The fathers of the early Church have occasionally expressed their views on Epicureanism. Tertullian, while he contradicts the theological dogmas of the sect, uses language occasionally which is in harmony with its fundamental principle. *Nihil est incorporale nisi quod non est:* and, *Omne quod est, corpus est sui generis.*[2] (Nothing is incorporeal except the non-existent: Everything which is, is a body of its kind.) And when he boldly declares that the Christian regards the teaching of secular literature as folly in the sight of God, he seems to re-echo in part the words of Epicurus.[3] Lactantius, in his "Divine Institutes" (310 A.D.), has given a fine enumeration of the secondary causes which may account for the spread of Epicureanism.[4] "It tells the ignorant they need study no literature: it releases the niggardly from the duties of public beneficence: it forbids the lounger to serve the State, the sluggard to work, and the coward to fight. The godless are told that the gods are indifferent: the selfish and malevolent is ordered to give nothing to any one,—because the wise man does everything for his own sake. The recluse hears

[1] Julian, *Fragm. Epist.*, 301, c. [2] *De Carne Christi*, c. 11.
[3] *De Spectaculis*, c. 18. [4] *Divin. Institut.*, III. 17.

the praises of solitude; and the miser learns that life can be supported on water and polenta. The man who hates his wife is presented with a list of the blessings of celibacy: the parent of a worthless offspring hears how good a thing is childlessness: the children of impious parents are told that there is no natural obligation upon them. The weak and luxurious are reminded that pain is the worst of all evils; and the brave man, that the sage is happy even in tortures. Those who are ambitious are bidden to court the sovereign; and those who shrink from worry are directed to avoid the palace." It is in a fairer tone that Gregory Nazianzen speaks of Epicurus as showing, by his temperate life, that the pleasure he preached was not the vulgar delights of licence.[1] No doubt this last was the current interpretation; and it seems to have been in the mind of Augustine, when in unregenerate days he would have given Epicureanism the palm, if only immortality had not turned the scale.[2]

From the third to the seventeenth century, Epicureanism was dormant as a system. The name, however, still survived as a stigma. Amongst the Rabbinical writers, the Hebrew transliteration of the word is used to denote a free-thinker, loose liver, and transgressor of the Mosaic law. Korah, who headed the movement against Moses, and the serpent who tempted Eve, are both described by the Hebrew commentators as Epicureans.[3] Similar was the use

[1] *Carm. Iamb.*, XVII. [2] August., *Confess.*, VI. 16.

[3] Selden, Opp., I. 1555–6; cf. Levy, *Neuhebräisches Wörterbuch*, I. 143.

in the Middle Ages and at the Renaissance. Thus, Villani declares that the troubles of Florence (1115–1117) were "not without cause and judgment of God, because the city was in those times exceedingly corrupted by heresy, and among the others the heresy of the Epicureans *per vitio di lussuria et di gola*, whereby the people of the city were so divided they defended the said heresy with armed hand."[1] And, again, speaking of Manfred, Villani says:—"His life was Epicurean, not believing in God or the saints, but only in corporeal delight." The same usage occurs in Boccaccio; and writers like John of Salisbury illustrate the meaning attached to it. The great Epicurean of the time, in some of its good, as well as its bad senses, was the free-thinking and free-living emperor Frederick II., of whom Gregory IX. wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury, that he held it wrong for a man to believe anything which he could not prove by the force and reason of nature (*vi et ratione naturæ*).[2]

With the Renaissance there appeared sporadically a naturalism, often licentious, which sometimes claimed kindred with Epicureanism. Partly from a misconception of Christianity, but still more from the peculiar conditions of mediæval existence, there had been a long divorce between the theology of the Church and the life and language of ordinary humanity. The re-awakening of natural affections and instincts into a free and passionate life was one of the aspects of the Renaissance, in which Epicurean ten-

[1] Villani, IV. 29; VI. 47. [2] Labbé, *Concilia*, XI. 348.

dencies might be traced. The philosophic expression of this revolt and protest is found in a small dialogue by Lorenzo Valla, *On Pleasure and True Good*, written between 1430 and 1435. Here we find put into the mouth of a contemporary poet a glorification of nature and of the natural law of enjoyment. The delights given through the senses—beautiful forms, musical tones, sweet tastes and smells—are the first class of pleasures enumerated. But the advocate of pleasure goes a step further, and defends the relaxation of sexual restraints. The treatise is a crude and hasty generalization, made under a not inexcusable hatred of monachism and conventionality. It turns into logical and systematic shape those demands of the heart and passions which can only claim our partial sympathy when presented in the colours of concrete life.

The same revival of the heart and the natural instincts is seen in a more mature and tranquil form when we look at Erasmus, Luther, Rabelais, and Montaigne. All of them, in their several ways, contend against the stagnation of conventionality, against the reign of asceticism,—all of them are humanists, in the wider sense of the word. The true Christian, says Erasmus, is the true Epicurean. The marriage of Luther, the monk, with Catharine Bora, the nun, was a defiance to the theological morality of the cloister. Rabelais substitutes for the conventual institutions of the past an abbey where the restraints of formal rules are abolished, and makes the novitiate of young men and maidens the preparation and beginning of

a useful, happy, and holy life. Montaigne writes with the mellowed and kindly cynicism of an Epicurean sage.

But it was not till the seventeenth century that Epicureanism reappeared as a system. In that age more than one effort was made to rehabilitate the philosophic schools of antiquity with the changes necessary to accommodate them to Christendom. The most conspicuous of these efforts was the exposition and adaptation of the Epicurean system by Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655). Gassendi published three works on this topic : the first, on the life, character, and doctrine of Epicurus ; the second, a commentary on the 10th book of Diogenes Laertius ; and the third, a systematic account of the Epicurean philosophy. In these works much was done by comparison, by critical ingenuity, and by sympathetic interest, to clear Epicureanism from the obloquy and misunderstanding under which it was buried. After pointing out the divergencies between Epicureanism and Christianity, he proceeded in a new work, the *Syntagma Philosophicum*, to sketch a system in which what he understood to be the principles of Epicurus were carried out, except in those points, such as the nature and operations of God, and the immortality of the human soul, where Epicureanism is unchristian, and in the logical introduction, where he went beyond his guides.

The second half of the seventeenth century was a period of philosophical excitement in France ; and Gassendi had his partisans, though neither so numerous nor so well known as those of Descartes. Samuel

de Sorbière, the translator of Sextus Empiricus, expressed warm approval of Gassendi's enterprise. François Bernier (1620-1688) a physician and traveller, defended and epitomized the doctrines of Gassendi, to whom personally he had shown a really filial affection. Another Frenchman, Jacques Rondeau (*Rondellus*), sometime Professor of Eloquence at Sedan, published in 1679, a tiny book on the life of Epicurus, which was translated both into Latin and English (1712). It is an enthusiastic defence of Epicurus, written with more zeal than knowledge, attempting to establish for its hero the possession of every virtue. The lighter graces and easy-going morality of Epicureanism found a skilful advocate in St. Evremond, whose letters to the modern Leontion, as he calls Ninon de l'Enclos, give what we may style the French-novel version of the *liaison* between Epicurus and his lady disciple. He finds nothing incompatible in a sensual and an intellectual friendship to the same person: which as a general truth need not be denied, though one may demur to its special application.

In more modern times the two men who in different ways most recall Epicurus are Jeremy Bentham and Auguste Comte. Both of them were founders of systems of thought which have been the objects of virulent attack; both of them attached to them a circle of devoted disciples, and have been gradually extending their range of influence. Bentham at his "Hermitage,"—a "unique, romantic-looking homestead," dark with the shade of ancient trees,—conversing simply and gracefully with such friends as

James Mill, Brougham, Romilly, and Dumont,—not averse to good fare, and fond of flowers and music, may serve for a modern Epicurus. Like Epicurus, he aimed at founding morality on an intelligible basis of fact, rejecting every tincture of asceticism, and especially insisting on the relativity of all legislation to human happiness. Like Epicurus, he offends sometimes by the blunt, hard language in which he destroys cherished prejudices, without seeming to care for the injury he may for the time cause to tender consciences and deep-rooted sentiments. In the case of Comte, we find enthusiastic disciples contributing towards the support of the needy thinker, as in the days of Epicurus. The anti-theological character of Positivism, the humanistic religion in which it culminates, and the fête-days in the Positivist calendar, are features which have a certain similarity to Epicureanism. But it may be added that the sentimental tendencies of Positivism set a wide barrier between it and the older system; which is strengthened when we take into account its merits as a philosophy of the sciences.

Guyau's work, *La Morale d'Épicure* (Paris, 1878) as well as those of Trezza, *Epicuro e l'Epicureismo* (Firenze, 1877) and of Conte and Rossi, *Esame della Filosofia Epicurea nelle sue fonti e nella storia* (Firenze, 1879) show the interest taken in the subject at the present time.[1] M. Guyau treats Epicureanism

[1] Not to forget Mr. Courtney's interesting essay on Epicurus in *Hellenica* (London, 1880); and a creditable degree-exercise by P. V. Gizycki (Halle, 1879).

mainly as the ancient forerunner of utilitarian and hedonistic theories. Signor Trezza gives a somewhat idealized picture of it, as the ancient gospel of a full and free humanity, living in the perception of the great law of nature and of love, and anticipating by two thousand years the advent of true philosophy. In the joint work of Signori Conti and Rossi the chief merit is a clear and moderate statement of the actual doctrines of the school, so far as they can be elicited from ancient documents, with a succinct, if somewhat unsympathetic, examination of Lucretius.

In the paucity of material, an estimate of the value of Epicureanism can scarcely fail to be influenced by the views or sentiments of the critic. Yet one or two points may perhaps be stated with moderate confidence. Its atomic theory, however crude and unscientific in some details, has the merit of clearly setting forward certain principles which the physical sciences are guided by. Even if we do not say with Hegel, that "Epicurus is the inventor of empirical natural science" we may still admit that he comes nearer to stating the general method of science than Aristotle. He is the foe of *à priori* methods, of arguing with abstract terms. His restriction of the scientific field to what he calls "body" is equally in its own sphere an advance. Nothing is gained, and much confusion is caused, by mixing up the spiritual with the material. The reduction of all physical phenomena to modes of motion, together with a more strictly "scientific" conception of what motion is, all

proceed in the same line of thought. His banishment of consciousness from the scene is equally in accordance with the procedure of the sciences in their stricter phase. If science is an analysis, then the atomic theory, which, setting life and consciousness aside, sees in the world an agglomeration of mere lengths and breadths and depths without any qualities whatever to characterize them, must be regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of science. Yet in the actual world there is a principle of unification: thought, life, action are all synthetic. Of these aspects of the world Epicureanism is almost silent. They are accounted but temporary and unimportant incidents on the great expanse of eternal silence—the wilderness of atoms.

In its theological doctrines, Epicureanism may be allowed the merit of a vigorous protest against superstition and the more degraded aspects of so-called religion. Its arguments have weight against the sacrificial rites of polytheism. It distinctly shows that God is not such as one of His terrestrial creatures, nor even as the orbs of heaven: that He is not to be identified with the world or any part thereof. It affirms that we are to conceive of God as having in Himself all that is best and noblest in man, and remove from our idea of Him all that is evil and miserable. It no less declares that this world has other purposes than to serve for the well-being of man, and asserts for the various provinces of existence a right to their own independent development. But, on the other hand, it puts God outside the

world, and reduces deity to the level of what is only a brighter and more ethereal humanity. As for the grounds on which the existence of these Epicurean Gods is proved, they seem utterly inadequate.

The psychological basis of Epicureanism is indistinct and apparently contradictory. While it claims to rest all truth and reality upon sensation, its own theory of the world is confessedly at variance with the verdict of sensation. It is reason, and not feeling, which pronounces for the atomic constitution of things: it is reason, and not feeling, which enlightens a man as to the limitations of life and pleasure. The fact seems to be, that by feeling or sensation Epicurus meant two things, which he did not distinguish: on the one hand, the principle or power of immediate and intuitive certainty, of clear and distinct consciousness; and on the other, the power of sense-perception, or feeling in its more concrete shapes. What is only true of the former, he transferred to the latter. Still on this point Epicureanism may be commended for its distrust of mere ratiocination, and its evident endeavour to get close into contact with individual reality. It is quite right in founding all knowledge on individual perceptions; only, and this it does not explicitly state, these perceptions are the product of factors which are essentially universal and intellectual. The forms of thought it treats as neglectfully as it did the synthetic aspects of existence.

The moral doctrine of Epicureanism sins mainly by its indefiniteness as to pleasure. It leaves the interpretation of what is pleasure open to the pleasure

or will of each individual. No doubt it assigns to prudence or wisdom the task of selecting and regulating pleasures; but, unfortunately, wisdom has no idea or ideal to guide it in the task. It may be said, that it will be determined in the choice by the consideration of what is best for the development and welfare of man. Such an ideal of self-realization, however, cannot be formed out of the individual consciousness alone: it implies the recognition of the solidarity and unity of man with man, as a body in which none lives unto himself, and where we are all members one of another. That unity had been detected by Aristotle and Plato in the Greek State. Epicurus saw that the merely political bond was often a hindrance to development; and he cast it aside as only an accident. Yet particular duties all presuppose the general conception of duty as the obligation of the individual towards something more than his natural self. Hence Epicureanism, which ignores any such obligation, must, if unchecked by other tacit motives, lead to a life of quietism, of indifference to all save intimate friends; and, at the worst, to sensuality and mere selfishness. But similar charges may be brought against all systems which emphasize exclusively one side of the truth.

Modern hedonism—the doctrine which measures the worth of life by its pleasures—refuses, Proteus-like, to be caught in any definite shape. Sometimes it appears in the bright hues of artistic culture; sometimes in the gross garb of sensuality; sometimes in the gray abstractions of utilitarianism. It declines to

recognise its idol in the dust and ashes to which the ethical analyst professes to reduce pleasure. But whatever it may be, modern hedonism is unlike Epicureanism, whose grave simplicity contrasts with the refinements of æsthetic emotion,—whose sober humanity puts selfish pleasure to shame,—and whose plainness of speech dispenses with the ratiocination of utilitarian systems. What Epicureanism taught was the unity and harmony of human nature ; and its aim was to make life complete in itself and independent of all external powers. Cheerfully, though gravely, the Epicurean took this present world as his all, and in it he hoped by reason to make for himself a heaven. Many things were ignored by Epicureanism. But in its frank acceptance of the realities of our human life, and of the laws of universal nature,—in its emphasis on friendly love as the great help in moral progress,—and in its rejection of the asceticism which mistakes penance for discipline, Epicureanism proclaimed elements of truth which the world cannot afford to lose.

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